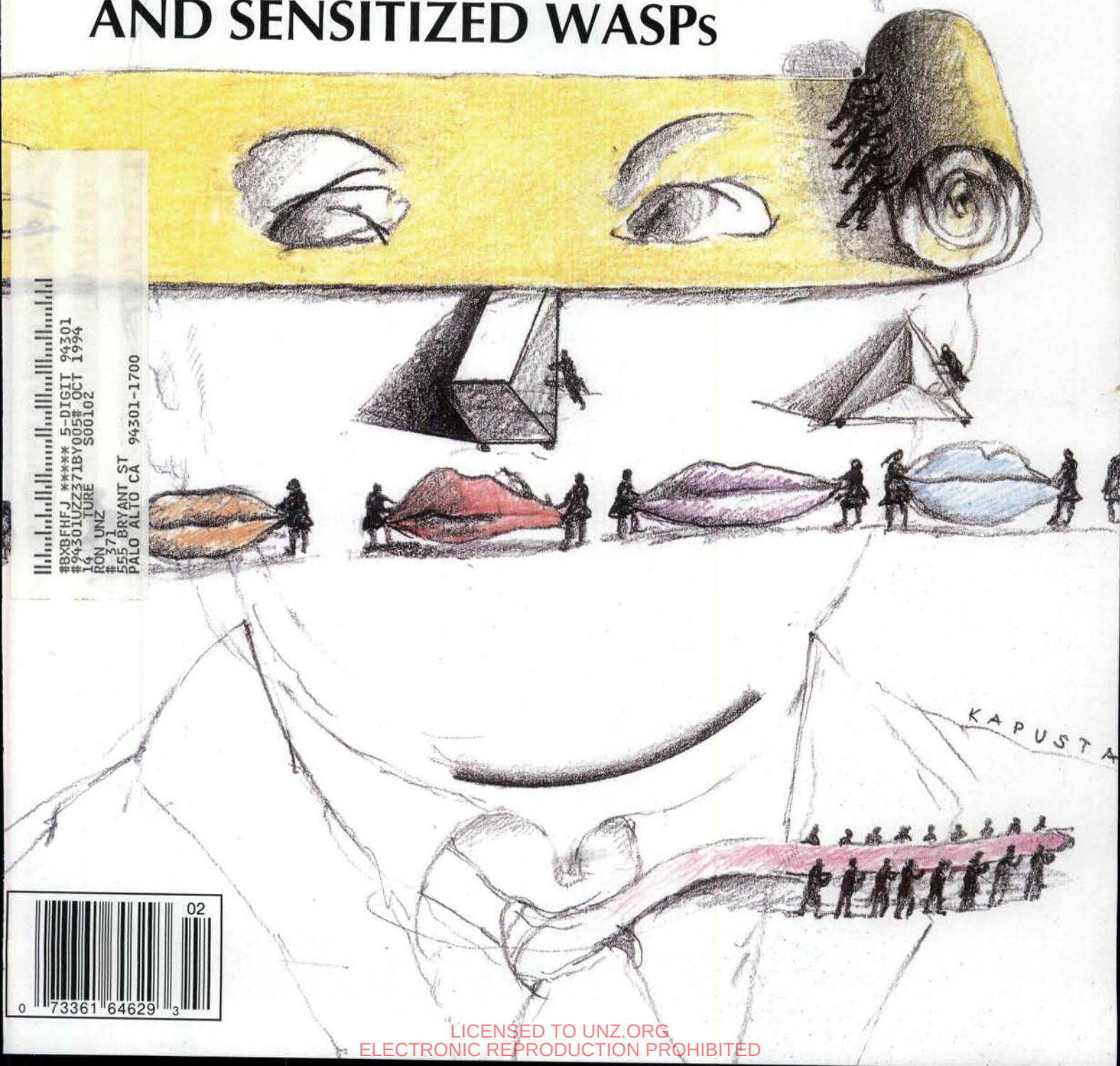
Chronicles

February 1994 A MAGAZINE OF AMERICAN CULTURE $2.95

90's MEN

PUSHY QUEERS, TOUGH JEWS, AND SENSITIZED WASPs



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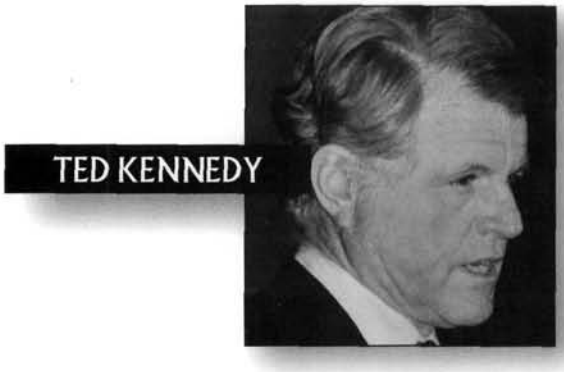

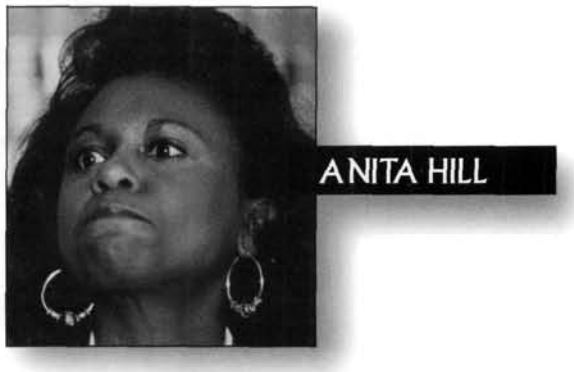

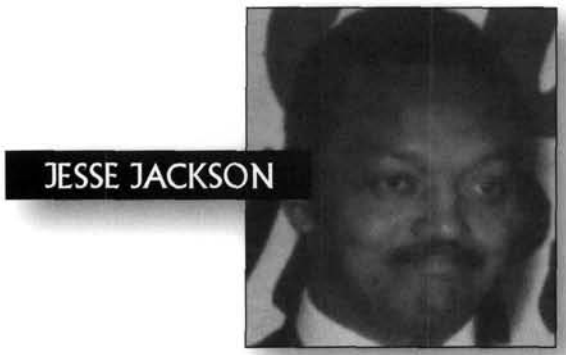

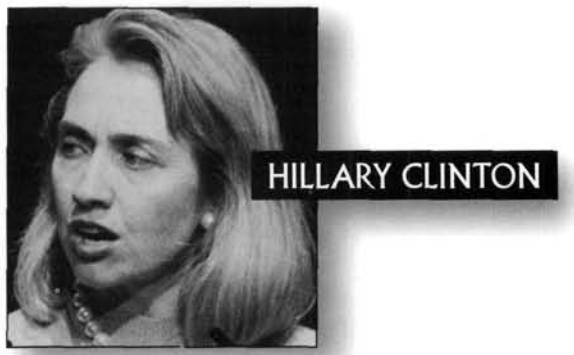

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A publication of The Rockford Institute.
Editorial and Advertising Offices:
934 North Main Street, Rockford, IL 61103.
Editorial Phone: (815) 964-5054.
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Subscription Department: P.O. Box 800,
Mount Morris, IL 61054. Call 1-800-877-5459.
For information on advertising in *Chronicles*,
please call Rochelle Frank at (815) 964-5811.

U.S.A. Newsstand Distribution by Eastern News Distributors, Inc., 1130 Cleveland Road, Sandusky, OH 44870.

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Chronicles (ISSN 0887-5731) is published monthly for $28 per year by The Rockford Institute, 934 North Main Street, Rockford, IL 61103-7061. Second-class postage paid at Rockford, IL and additional mailing offices. POSTMASTER: Send address changes to *Chronicles*, P.O. Box 800, Mount Morris, IL 61054.

The views expressed in *Chronicles* are the authors' alone and do not necessarily reflect the views of The Rockford Institute or of its directors. Unsolicited manuscripts cannot be returned unless accompanied by a self-addressed stamped envelope.

Chronicles
A MAGAZINE OF AMERICAN CULTURE

Vol. 18, No. 2 February 1994

Printed in the United States of America

CULTURAL REVOLUTIONS

THE BOY CHOIR of Duke University has been done away with, apparently at the behest of one of the campus ministers, a woman who had never even attended any of the services at which the choir performed but who complained that the group was one of the "subtle and not so subtle vestiges of male privilege" that she has a vocation to extirpate. It is refreshing to see a modern-day cleric promoting orthodoxy of *any* sort, but some of us could suggest more obvious places to start a heresy hunt.

Duke University is in Durham, North Carolina, a funky old New South town whose chief contributions to American life probably lie in the areas of piedmont blues music and the mass production of cigarettes. Like any Southern town that has been around for a while, Durham has its odd features. A writer for the *Charlotte Observer* reported recently, for instance, that four of the seven Americans known to have swallowed their toothbrushes were from the Bull City.

Even odder than that, in some ways, is the fact that this wholesome blue-collar town is home to Duke. Yet there it lies, its mock-Gothic campus nestled incongruously among the abandoned cigarette factories and the Carolina pines, an institution once best known for basketball, the rice diet, psychic research, and turning down the papers of its most distinguished alumnus, Richard M. Nixon. A while back a physician named H.L. Newbold speculated in the British journal *Medical Hypotheses* that tobacco baron James Duke founded the place because of neurological damage and depression resulting from pernicious anemia—and that certainly does explain a lot.

Now if someone could just explain the peculiar behavior of some of Duke's literature professors. As you've probably seen, their high jinks have been getting a lot of bad press lately from Dinesh D'Souza and his friends.

I often find myself defending the place. After all, my wife, her brothers, my godson, and several of my cousins are Duke graduates, my uncle taught there for many years, and several of my friends still do. So I always try to point out that Duke is not only a *trendinista* stronghold but also something of a bastion of the counterrevolution, the home of some fine reactionary scholars and publications, and the only campus in the country with its own chapter of the National Association of Scholars. It is not beyond salvation.

Look, I yield to no one in my concern for women's rights. I care a whole lot more about my daughter's opportunities than about the prerogatives of the couple of billion earthlings who happen to be male, most of whom I do not even know. But this assault on the boy choir is just silly.

Some splendid music has been written for women's voices, and no one would complain if Duke nurtured a girls' choir of distinction equal to that of its now-late boy choir. But it's simply a fact that the unchanged voices of boys *sound* different from those of girls, or of a mixed-sex choir, and many masterworks of church music were composed for precisely that sound. Moreover, the Duke chapel may well be the only space between Washington and Atlanta truly suited for the performance of such music: it is the nearest thing this world offers to a Methodist cathedral, from the Duke family's heroic tombs to sculpted images by the doorway, including those of John Wesley, Savonarola, and Robert E. Lee.

Choral evensong is one of the glories of the English university tradition that Duke apes in a great many less attractive ways. But a boy choir by definition is not "inclusive," so it has to go. If nothing else, this bizarre decision reveals the hollowness of the "diversity" scam, which celebrates the alleged contributions of almost every imaginable culture, no matter how squalid or insignificant, except the historic European one that gave us, among other things, Duke University. "Within the context of Duke University and its goals, values, and mission," the dean of the chapel says, having a choir open only to boys is "unfair."

Bull pucky. Last I heard, the Duke basketball team was still all-male. You Dukies want to get *serious*?

—John Shelton Reed

JACK KEMP, an unemployed bureaucrat who's never run so much as a lemonade stand, recently started an expensive newsletter to tell other people how to run their businesses. "Let's Make America Prosper Again . . . Starting With YOU!" he says in a flyer for his *Jack Kemp's American Entrepreneur*. Send just $45 and

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learn "How You Can Build Your Career, Your Business, and Your Family's Future."

If I wanted to follow Kemp's path to success, I would start out as a football player, become a union-sponsored congressman from Hamburg, New York, vote to spend more tax money than Pat Schroeder, get appointed to a high post in a welfare-state bureaucracy, agitate for dozens of new liberal programs in the name of "empowerment," and expand the agency's budget 43 percent.

Yet in this mailing Kemp seems to be an expert on business entrepreneurship. In fact, he has "a warm spot in [his] heart for entrepreneurs and their dreams." He complains about big-spending elitist liberals, but fails to mention that he lent support to the Clintons during the presidential campaign. "They're all friends of mine" he told the *Washington Post*, which is why he, in an unprecedented action, testified on behalf of his Housing and Urban Development (HUD) successor Henry Cisneros during Senate confirmation hearings.

So what does Jack Kemp have to offer in his new newsletter? Inspiring advice, like "never give in," and practical help on starting a franchise. What should I do first? "Contact franchisers. Start to compare the costs and benefits carefully." And *American Entrepreneur* is only eight pages long, so you won't have to wade through "lengthy, time-consuming articles." Like this 24-page promotional magazine.

Kemp wants to teach *you* the secret to "Finding Creative Sources of Financing." Speaking of which, in his four years at HUD, Kemp spent $100 billion, which is more than enough to send a subscription of *American Entrepreneur* to every person within U.S. borders, including illegal immigrants, until the year 2000. Or, come to think of it, he could avoid isolationism and send a subscription to every literate person in the world.

Should American businessmen really take his advice? His old agency is still riddled with waste and corruption, with billions "unaccounted for," which is why even his own inspector general had warned that "another scandal is a distinct possibility" if he didn't clean it up. The *Washington Journalism Review* recently marveled at how he scampered away with his reputation intact.

If Kemp is pro-business, why did he refuse to sell off the nation's public housing stock to real investors when he had the chance and instead turn over public housing to the left-wing "community groups" that will support him, he hopes, when he runs for President in 1996? If he cares about private enterprise, why did he block the sale of the Los Angeles Airport to business? If he loves small entrepreneurs, why did he swoon over the L.A. rioters and give the back of his hand to the Korean merchants they burned out? Why, in fact, should a businessman listen to a politician who told the *Washington Post*, "I'm from the Lane Kirkland wing of the Republican Party"?

Kemp's whole political life has been a racket, somehow maintaining a conservative reputation while helping to impose welfarist, big-spending, social-democratic policies. The illusion continues, thanks to the publishers of *Jack Kemp's American Entrepreneur*.

—*Jeffrey A. Tucker*

LADY-WRITER Molly Ivins stamped her little foot in the *Washington Post* a while back and urged us to "ban the damn things." "Ban them all," she said, meaning guns, and she must have made her advanced composition teacher so proud by using colloquial words like "hooey" and passionate phrases like "just plain insane," delivering blinding insights like "a gun is literally the power to kill," and constructing stunning constitutional arguments like "14-year-old boys are not part of a well-regulated militia" so all guns should be banned. Fourteen-year-old girls, I guess, don't play with guns; they play with dolls, or, in some ominous cases, word processors.

So Molly trips along, throwing her pseudo-pithy tantrum against the Second Amendment rights of millions of Americans, and she apparently expects to be taken seriously. Some people do, of course, take her seriously. Fans of lady-writers (usually embittered, leftist, urban divorcées) like to put the cuter columns on refrigerator doors so they can revisit their favorite passages with frequency. Most of us just shake our heads in amusement and move on to serious writers, pausing only—in Molly's case—to send yet another check to the NRA.

Lady-writers tend to write about the same things. Ellen Goodman, one of the founding mothers of the lady-writer genre, did another one of her gun control things a few weeks after Molly. They must have the equivalent of their second cup of coffee over the back fence, after the real journalists have gone to work, and divvy up responsibilities as to whose turn it is to whine on this subject and shriek on that.

"Lady-writer," by the way, is my little label for someone—usually an affirmative-action case—whose gender can be determined even without a by-line or internal clues, other than a fluffiness of thought and a penchant for throwing little self-absorbed, liberal snits. They are the emotional descendants of the "committee of sappy women" Mark Twain wrote about over a century ago, always ready to "drip a tear from their permanently impaired and leaky waterworks." Even earlier they added to the melancholy of Edgar Allan Poe.

So, Molly doesn't like guns. They make loud noises and they scare her. They should all be banned. Isn't she bold? While those tiresome nonlady writers struggle with things like logic and reality—and history and law—she bypasses all that stuff. Ban them all. Just do it. Okay, on to the next column. What's up for today? Sexism or daycare? Haven't done the glass ceiling thing in a while. Florida going to fry any murderers we can cry over?

Now, lest I be accused of sexism, not all women are lady-writers. Mary McGrory, for instance, who is a predictable and tendentious leftist harridan, is not a lady-writer, nor are several women on the right (Mona Charen and Phyllis Schlafly come to mind). Georgie Anne Geyer certainly isn't.

Actually, even some men can be categorized as lady-writers. Abe Rosenthal of the *New York Times*, for instance, comes across as an old Russian woman at a funeral, wailing and screeching. One can envision him wearing a babushka at his word processor as he taps out yet another testimonial to his moral superiority over just everyone—in particular Pat Buchanan, or anyone else who quibbles with leading-edge Likud thinking. Even George Will feels compelled on occasion to extract a lace hankie from his foppish attire and sniffle into it a column or two designed to establish his sensitivity. The agenda here is to distance himself, in the eyes of the liberal opinion establishment, from grimy, bayonet-wielding, right-wing infantrymen like Buchanan, Sam Francis, and Joe Sobran. William Buckley, in his dotage, dons lady-writer pantaloons every now and then, no doubt to sweeten and lengthen his under-construction *New York Times*

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obit.

Want to be a lady-writer? Step one: take some advanced comp classes at Wellesley. Step two: get out the liberal play book on gay rights, government funding of everything except the military, and especially whiny, wacky feminism. Step three: make everything introspective, emotional, and personal. Use your family as props, e.g., "I was thinking about gay rights for an upcoming column, and as I tucked my four-year-old baby-woman in the other night, she turned to me and said, 'Mommy, just because a man wears a dress, why don't people like him like they like mommies? Mommies wear dresses, too.'" Awww . . . magnet that mother on the refrigerator door. Jimmy Carter tried that type of thing with Amy on nuclear bombs and it bombed, but it works for lady-writers.

Anna Quindlen, the perky little liberal airbag who deploys a couple of times a week from the dashboard of the *Times*, says things like her toughest challenge is to "raise feminist sons," who will no doubt turn out like the poufters some of her sillier columns have been written on. The screechy, petulant piece she threw together when Magic Johnson flunked his lab test is probably on every refrigerator door in Greenwich Village.

"I don't want to hear any more about the impropriety of clean-needle exchanges or the immorality of AIDS education in the schools," she raged. "I don't want to hear any more about how condoms shouldn't be advertised on television and in the newspapers." She doesn't want to hear it, so we mustn't say it to her ever again. Quindlen and Molly Ivins are from the same foot-stomping branch of the gyno-journalism school. Magic Johnson, according to Anna, "always looks to me like a guy you should hug." (His fellow NBA players quickly passed on that one.) Besides, Magic's disingenuous little speech inspired Anna's "eight-year-old" (one of the future feminist sons) to "ask her about safe sex." This stuff goes on the op-ed page of America's "paper of record."

It's not a bad living, being a lady-writer. You dip your pen in estrogen, write some really air-headed, emotional things, innocent of logic, throw in a couple of fatuous Linda Ellerbee-style non sequiturs, and step back and say, "Wow, am I irreverent, or what?" Hey, it works. Some people take Ellen Goodman seriously, and Anna Quindlen, to the shock and amusement of real journalists, actually walked off with an Affirmative Action Pulitzer.

I would suggest, however, that we put this kind of stuff in the women's section, the way we used to, next to "Hints from Heloise" columns, crash diets, and Midol ads, and let the girls go at it on issues like Tailhook and tributes to ventilated abortionists and why men are afraid of a really serious woman like Hillary. Molly Ivins seems to have just what it takes to cover these and other lady-writer issues with just the right frosting of pop-liberal pithiness. She's going to be just peachy.

—*Will Lane*

CANADA'S role in World War II was relived last year on Canadian national television via a mini-series entitled *The Valour and the Horror*. The second part of the series, *Death by Moonlight: Bomber Command*, was met by protests so widespread as to cause the whole series to be placed on the agenda of the Canadian Senate's Subcommittee on Veterans Affairs. The senate hearings, at which historians and other witnesses testified to the film's inaccuracies and distortions, coincided with the CBC (which broadcast the series) asking its ombudsman, William Morgan, to prepare a report.

Morgan's report, which was cut from its initial 60 pages to 13 before being released to the public, found that the series is "flawed as it stands and fails to measure up to CBC's demanding policies and standards." The senate subcommittee found that "the National Film Board, based on a brief statement of the concept, handed over $729,000 to the filmmakers and gave them the right of final cut. They made little or no attempt to check the accuracy of the filmmakers' research."

The film soon became a media issue: Bomber Command veterans vs. electronic and print media that closed ranks behind the producers, Brian and Terence McKenna, and charged the veterans with censorship and libel. At first, the CBC's chairman undertook to correct the many errors on air, but this was not done. The National Film Board's president then refused to reply to veterans' protests, and it was not until January 1993, when the government of Ontario proclaimed the Class Proceedings Act, that the issue could be moved from a largely hostile media to the courts.

The Bomber Harris Trust was formed to represent the 25,000 Canadian survivors of Bomber Command Aircrew and, with the invaluable and voluntary help of counsel (too young for the war but a gentleman and a patriot), produced a 221-page statement of claim in a class-action suit against the CBC, NFB, et al., filed in Ontario Court last July.

The claim lists 41 statements, dramatizations, inferences, innuendos, depictions, and distortions that "are not true." For example, the film asserts that Air Marshal Harris refused to redirect his attacks to pre-invasion targets in support of Overlord and that "in the end, Harris got his way. His campaign to destroy German cities would continue, with a devastating cost to his own aircrews." But the facts are that Harris gave his full support to Overlord. From March to June, 1944, 83 percent of the command's effort was in direct support of the invasion. Aircrew loss rates declined from 2.6 percent in 1943 to 1.9 percent in 1944 and 0.9 percent in 1945. The film features the "firestorm" of the July 27/28, 1943, attack on Hamburg and has the actor playing Harris say, "In spite of all that happened at Hamburg, bombing proved a relatively humane method. There is no proof that most casualties were women and children." This is followed by a picture of dead bodies, and the narrator says, "In fact there is proof. The Germans kept very careful records. For every 100 men killed in Hamburg, 160 women died. Of the 42,000 killed in Hamburg, 8,400 were children. Most were crushed, asphyxiated or roasted alive." But Harris's two sentences are lifted from the beginning and end of a 228-word paragraph in his autobiography that is not about Hamburg; it is about bombing compared to, one, "the flower of the youth of this country and our allies being mown down by the military in the field, as it was in Flanders in the war of 1914-1918"; and, two, the estimated 800,000 deaths in Germany caused by that war's blockade—"naturally these were mainly of women and children and old people because at all cost the enemy had to keep fighting men adequately fed." The words that actually precede the second, altered, sentence are: "It is not easy to estimate what in effect were the casualties caused by Allied bombings in Germany. German records were incomplete and often unreliable, but the

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Americans put the number of deaths at 305,000. There is no estimate of how many of these were women and children. On the contrary, the Germans carried out large schemes of evacuation, especially children, from the main industrial cities."

Damages are claimed to amount to $500 million. However, should the court rule that every showing of the film be preceded by a disclaimer (statements untrue, dramatizations fictional, not the official view of the Canadian government), plaintiffs will cap the claim at $25 million compensatory damages to the class and $25 million punitive damages to the plaintiffs as individuals and as a class.

The Trust proposes that each member of the class receive a nominal one dollar and that to serve future generations of Canadians the remainder be divided between the Canadian Red Cross that did so much to keep our POWs alive, the Air Cadet League of Canada, aviation-linked institutions such as the RCAF Memorial Museum and Canadian Warplanes Heritage, and the founding at a Canadian university of a chair to study and promote the highest standards of ethics in print and electronic journalism.

After the claim was filed, and announced in a Canada-wide news release, and after details of the statement began to seep into editorial offices, media attitudes changed. References to censorship and libel gave way to a recognition that veterans who had fought, and whose many friends and contemporaries had given their lives, to preserve individual freedom against the arbitrary power of the state that the Nazi enemy personified, were fighting again to preserve the truth of what they did.

Defenders of the film reject criticism on the grounds that military history is open to differing interpretations. But the veterans plead that the filmmakers "set about to effect a revision of history so as to conform the facts thereof to their political, or pacifist, or antimilitary opinions. In particular, the plaintiffs say that the defendants intended their 'commercial' version to be distributed to educational institutions and primary and secondary school educators to be used as teaching aids for successive generations of Canadian children."

This has been the veterans' chief concern, and it was gratifying to reap the first fruits of their efforts last September, when the East York Board of Education banned *The Valour and the Horror* from use in most classrooms. "Only students in the final year of high school will be allowed to watch the series, and when it is viewed it will be accompanied by material that 'refutes and rebuts' the film's claims," said Evelyn Wilson, superintendent of programs at the board. Students will be asked to analyze the bias and perspective of the documentary, reported the *Toronto Star* on September 11, 1993. East York is the first of Metro Toronto's seven school boards to take a public stand on the film's suitability for classroom use. Other school boards are now reviewing it.

Meanwhile the Bomber Harris Trust has published its first newsletter—*Flarepath*—to spread the word among the thousands of donors from all walks of life who have sent money toward the cost of the suit. The statement of claim, which dissects the film's false statements line by line and sets out the true facts, is being prepared by the trustees for publication and sale in paperback as *A Battle for Truth*.

Veterans are confident of victory in the suit, but whatever the judicial outcome, two things are certain: the story will be standard fare in journalism schools for years to come, and Canada's veterans will have had their say against this attempt, by Canada's cultural agencies, to defame them.

—*Kenneth McDonald*

ANDREI NAVROZOV, long-time contributor to *Chronicles*, has been for many years a thorn in the side of the conventional liberals who insist on calling themselves "conservative." His new book, *The Gingerbread Race*, published by Picador in London, has already provoked an ill-tempered outburst from the foreign-born editor of *National Review*, who tries to brand Mr. Navrozov as a conspiracy-monger. As a Russian, the author probably takes that as a compliment, but his experience as editor of the *Yale Lit*—for several years one of the few magazines in America worth picking up—convinced him that between Moscow and New Haven, there was little choice. Anyone who suspects that American culture is dominated by a conspiracy of dunces will find ample confirmation in Mr. Navrozov's first-hand account of his trials (including a court trial) in America. Critics will say that his view of American life is warped by paranoia, but nothing less than Russian paranoia can grapple with contemporary reality. *The Gingerbread Race* is well worth both the price and the effort of ordering it from England.

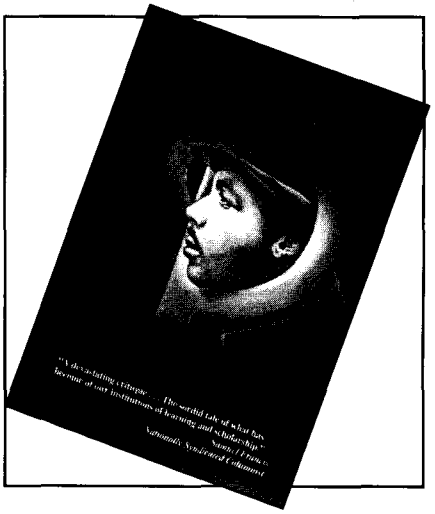
—*Thomas Fleming*

OBITER DICTA: This month, we have to report that Chronicles can be found at the following bookstores in New York City: Hudson News, 753 Broadway; Eastern Lobby Shops, 55 Water Street and 30 Rockefeller Plaza; Barnes & Noble Superstore, 128 Fifth Avenue; and Kroch's and Brentano's, 597 Fifth Avenue.

Chronicles Editor Thomas Fleming's essay "A League of Our Own" (February 1993) was included in Scott Walker's anthology *The Graywolf Annual Ten: Changing Community*, just out from Graywolf Press. The collection, which centers on the search for new forms of community, also contains selections from Vaclav Havel, Jane Kramer, and Lewis Lapham.

Chilton Williamson, Jr.'s new column, "The Hundredth Meridian," will not appear this month because Mr. Williamson has contributed a guest "Perspective" instead. Such a lapse may occasionally occur when Mr. Williamson is working on other pieces for the magazine.

We wish also to announce that Theodore Pappas's book on *The Martin Luther King, Jr., Plagiarism Story* will be available in late February. It sells for $10, shipping and handling charges included. For ordering as well as more information about the book, please see the advertisement on page 22.



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by Samuel Francis

A Banner With a Strange Device

As the House of Representatives slithered toward its vote on the North American Free Trade Agreement last November, the regiments of lobbyists who were peddling the pact set up their tents in what the *New York Times* described as "a stately conference room on the first floor of the Capitol, barely an elevator ride away from the action in the House chamber." There, amidst the high-tech opulence in which the public interest is bought and sold, the real rulers of the United States bargained and bickered over the economic future and national sovereignty of the country. According to the *Times*' account of the scene, the "stately conference room" was plastered with banners that proclaimed the ethic of the New World hog trough into which the lobbyists were bartering the nation and that were intended to inspire those who required inspiration with a firm moral grounding for the bribery and lies by which they earn their bread. One of the banners tells us all we need to know about both NAFTA and the larger issues that stood on the auction block that week. "We defend," it blared, "and we build a way of life not for America alone, but for all mankind." There was a time not too long ago when such banalities of humanitarian universalism were left to gather cosmic dust on the surface of the moon, but today they are taken seriously as formulas by which the managed evanescence of the United States is rationalized.

But for all the banality of the banner, the device it bore communicated an important truth about NAFTA and the forces that pushed it. Strangely enough, it was NAFTA opponent Jesse Jackson who perhaps encapsulated those forces most succinctly in a statement uttered soon after the vote. "President Clinton," the country's most voluble Professional Negro proclaimed, "leads the Reagan-Bush-Limbaugh-Iacocca-Kissinger-Rostenkowski-major publishers-Wall Street-Republicans victory team." While this, of course, is not a precise analysis, the Reverend Jackson's proclamations are never noticeable for their precision or their analytic clarity (although at least this one doesn't rhyme). Nevertheless, his description does accurately suggest that it was the nation's elite that offered the most fervent apologetic for NAFTA, and not merely the corporate elite but also our political and cultural oligarchs. That is why Mr. Clinton could trot out every living ex-President in support of the treaty as well as the recently retired chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff and most of the country's governors, and that is why NAFTA lobbyists enjoyed such posh headquarters in the U.S. Capitol, while their opponents had to make do with rather less up-scale offices considerably farther from the elevators.

What binds these different elites together, however, is not merely their commitment to NAFTA but their larger investment in the emergent transnational regime—variously known as the "New World Order," the "Global Economy," the "First Universal Nation," etc.—toward the construction of which, as Henry Kissinger announced, NAFTA is the first vital step. Probably more than any other political issue for years, NAFTA shows clearly the immense gulf that separates the interests of these elites from the interests and aspirations of Middle Americans. In an analysis of the NAFTA conflict soon after the vote, *Washington Post* reporter Thomas Edsall made it clear that the real source of the struggle over the trade agreement was not simply "left" versus "right" or "free trade" versus "protection," but rather a social conflict between the elite as characterized by Mr. Jackson and what Mr. Edsall described as "men and women without college degrees for whom the work ethic no longer is paying off." "For the past 20 years, for men especially," Mr. Edsall added, "inflation-adjusted wages have been eroding, and the likelihood of permanent layoff has grown."

Democratic Whip David Bonior, one of the leading opponents of the trade agreement in the House, was even more specific about the Middle American opposition to the treaty. "When jobs are lost," he said in the debate on the House floor, "these are the people who have to sell their homes, pull their kids out of school and look for new work. The working people who stand against this treaty don't have degrees from Harvard. They don't study economic models. And most of them never heard of Adam Smith. But they know when the deck is stacked against them." It will be recalled, and Mr. Edsall did recall it, that it was precisely this stratum of the American population to whom Mr. Clinton pledged his troth in his acceptance speech at the Democratic Convention in 1992, "the people who work hard, pay their taxes, [and] play by the rules," and of course, as with every other successful presidential candidate who has gulled Middle Americans into supporting him, Mr. Clinton's practice in office has been to betray them at every opportunity and to ally himself with the elite and its interests.

The conflict between, on the one hand, the Middle American core of the nation and, on the other, an elite lodged in the bureaucratized, technocratic, and increasingly global mass organizations of the state, economy, and culture is of course not new and has underlain and informed most of the social and political conflicts in the United States since the 1960's. Yet with the NAFTA debate, the conflict reached a new level, turned a corner, and took a giant step toward an explicitly nationalist (and, on the other side, an explicitly anti-nationalist and globalist) consciousness. While earlier stages of the conflict have settled on cultural, racial, and social issues, what the NAFTA battle accomplished for the first time was to bind and synthesize the economic complaints of the Middle American core with the issue of nationhood itself.

The opposition to NAFTA generally emphasized two major flaws of the agreement. One was its effect on American jobs and the "giant sucking sound" the agreement would cause the economy to emit as American jobs gurgled across the Rio Grande. The other was its erosive effect on national sovereignty through the trinational panels that the agreement empowers to rule on which local and

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state laws remain valid under its terms: the degree to which Americans may make, enforce, or repeal the laws under which they live and work. Both are essentially nationalist issues, the latter obviously so, but the former no less so. It was the unique accomplishment of the best known opponent of the agreement, Ross Perot, to muff his implicit grasp of these nationalist issues in his disastrous debate with Vice President Gore just before the vote. By his useless chatter about the environmental depredations of American corporations in Mexico, Mr. Perot dropped the nationalist ball and succeeded only in showing that he didn't understand his own argument, which originally spoke to the effects of the agreement on his own country and its people.

Yet despite Mr. Perot's fumbling, NAFTA remained for most of its opponents a nationalist issue, and the conjunction of the Middle American economic crisis with the matter of sovereignty for the first time raises the level of the Middle American conflict by a notch or two. Sovereignty, of course, has been an issue at the heart of American foreign involvement in the Gulf War, the Balkans, and Somalia under United Nations authority, although for most Americans it has been a rather abstract and elusive concern. Only when President Clinton actually transferred military command of American troops to foreign officers under U.N. authority last year and only when body bags began to come back to the United States from Somalia was the issue of national sovereignty in the continuing adventures of New World globalism rendered concrete. The NAFTA debate not only rendered sovereignty concrete but also made it a matter of dollars and cents, because it at once became clear that the managed erosion and violation of national sovereignty that NAFTA enshrines were closely linked to the loss of American jobs and the economic ruination of the middle class. It suddenly dawned on millions of Middle Americans that the diminution of national sovereignty would march in step with the decline of their own economic position. Finally, NAFTA also made clear that if the material interests of Middle Americans were linked to national sovereignty, they were at odds with the interests of the transnational managerial elite, just as the interests of the elite are closely linked to the abandonment of sovereignty.

What NAFTA showed, then, was that two sociopolitical blocs have now emerged in American politics. On the one hand, there is a Middle American core that not only remains culturally and emotionally loyal to the institutions of American nationality but also is materially interested in a strong, independent, and sovereign nation and accurately sees its material interests in conflict with those of the dominant elites in the American economy, state, and culture. On the other hand, there is an elite driven by its multinational corporate and commercial interests to dilute, erode, and compromise the sovereignty of the American nation and at the same time and for the same material reasons to weaken the economic position of Middle America.

The latter is not merely a side-effect but a deliberate strategy on behalf of the corporate structures the elite controls. In a previous *Chronicles* column, I quoted the remark of Donald V. Fites, chairman of Caterpillar Inc., to the effect that "there is a narrowing of the gap between the average American's income and that of the Mexicans. As a human being, I think what is going on is positive. I don't think it is realistic for 250 million Americans to control so much of the world's GNP." The jury may still be out as to whether Mr. Fites is really a human being, though it's pretty clear he's not much of an American, but his view is not exceptional among other "American" corporate leaders. "For the first time," the *New York Times* reported as long ago as 1987, "American manufacturers are talking openly about a new and startling wage goal: They want to greatly narrow the gap between what they pay their factory workers and the earnings of workers in South Korea, Brazil, and a handful of other third world countries." Robert E. Mercer, chairman of Goodyear, echoes this sentiment. "In one way or another," he vows, "the gap will have to close."

The reason the gap will have to close is intimately connected to the economic logic of world trade. American firms cannot afford to pass up the bonanza of foreign markets, but they find themselves priced out of those markets by goods produced by the cheap labor of the Third World. They cannot swallow the rock of trade protectionism, by which the wage level of their American employees could be salvaged, since that would provoke retaliations by foreign nations that could close off access to world markets; but neither can they keep sitting in the uncompetitive hard place where the payment of high American wages puts them. Hence, something has to give, and of course what the corporate elite is eager to give is the economic position of Middle America, which the corporate managers have decided to convert into a Third World work force.

Hence NAFTA, which will achieve this goal in part by simply moving jobs to the Third World and in part by using the threat of movement as a club with which to hammer wage negotiations into acceptable shape. Hence also mass immigration, which imports a cheap work force in competition with American workers as well as a new urban underclass with which the governmental managerial elite can play its social-therapeutic

LIBERAL ARTS

PATRIOTISM AND MANHOOD

"In order to be a respectable man one must be a good son, good husband, and good father; in other words, one must combine all the public and private virtues. . . . Therein lies the true definition of the word patriotism."

—*The French Republican to the citizen of Philadelphia as quoted by Patrice Higonnet in "Sans-culottes," from Fouret and Ozouf's* Dictionnaire critique.

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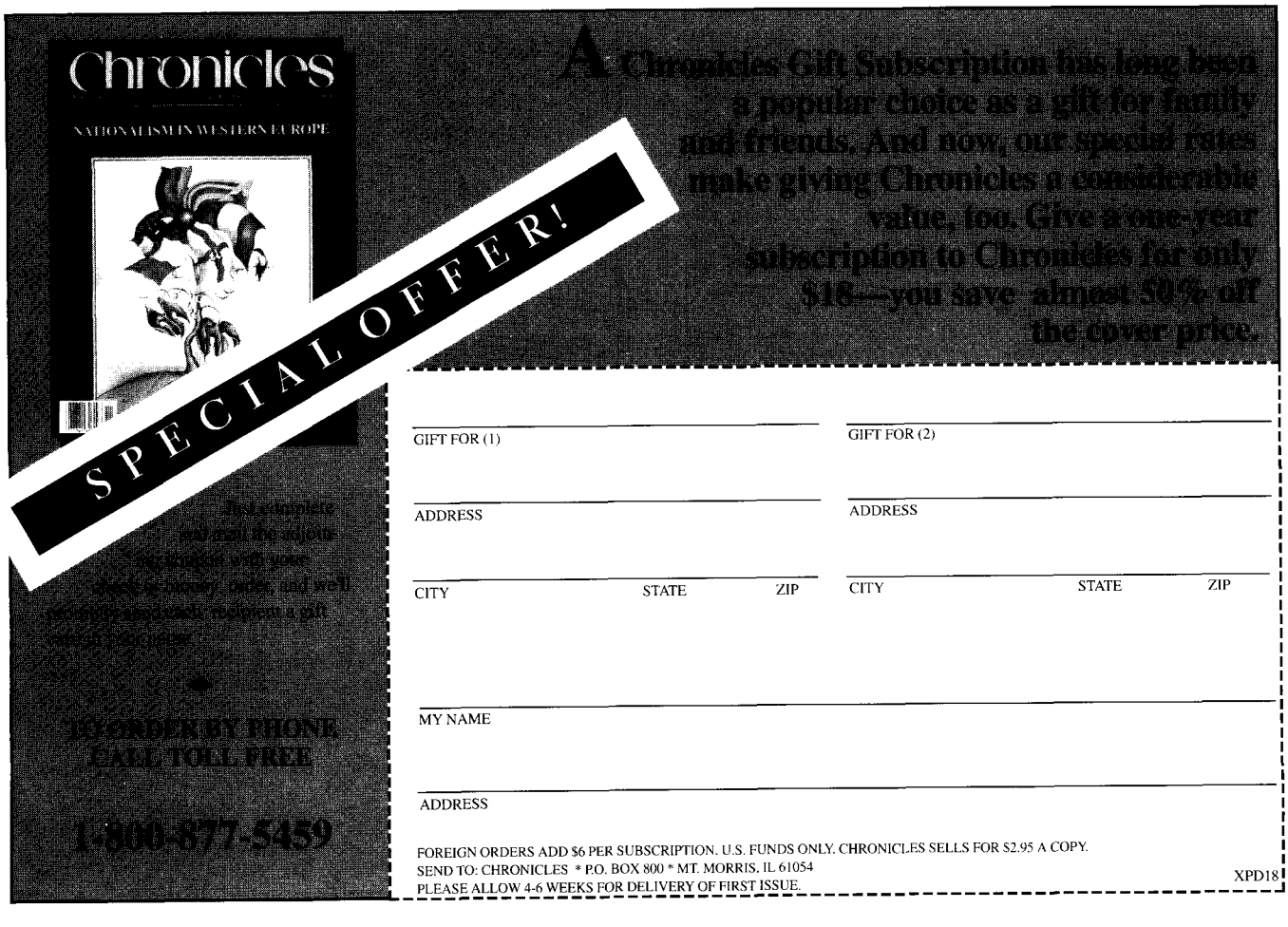
games for a generation or more. As long as the interests of the managerial elites of corporate capitalism and the megastate are placed ahead of those of the core of the American nation, this conflict between the interests of the elite and those of the Middle American core will persist, and only the displacement of the elite in both the corporate economy and the megastate and of its structural interests in the organizations of Leviathan Capitalism and the Leviathan State can resolve the conflict in favor of Middle Americans.

Decades ago, Joseph Schumpeter showed how modern managerial capitalism subverts the very cultural fabric that produces it, and last August, in an article in *Harper's*, David Rieff showed how the real engine of the much-lamented "multiculturalism" that now subverts Western and American civilization in the nation's schools and universities is driven by what he called "Multiculturalism's Silent Partner," the "Global Economy":

> The more one reads in academic multiculturalist journals and in business publications, and the more one contrasts the speeches of CEOs and the speeches of noted multiculturalist academics, the more one is struck by the similarities in the way they view the world. Far from standing in implacable intellectual opposition to each other, both groups see the same racial and gender transformations in the demographic makeup of the United States and of the American workforce. That non-white workers will be the key to the 21st century American labor market is a given in most sensible long-range corporate plans.

Mr. Rieff's article and the remarks of American corporate leaders quoted above point toward another social and political convergence that parallels that of the Middle Americans of the anti-NAFTA movement last fall. So far from constituting a culturally conservative force that works for the preservation of the nation and its demographic cultural core, the managerial regime and its elite in state, economy, and culture are the enemies of the nation and its people; managerial capitalism works to undermine, weaken, and destroy them, and therefore an alliance of managerial capitalism with the multicultural and anti-national left is natural and logical.

If that alliance includes the Clinton administration as well as the globalist conservatism of Newt Gingrich, Jack Kemp, Ronald Reagan, Bob Dole, and Phil Gramm, it makes equal sense for the Middle American foes of NAFTA to make their bed with a nationalist right that places little faith in the Republican Party and its tepid ideologies but constructs a new political force founded on putting the interests of the American nation and the American people first. Last fall, these new alliances began to emerge and to engage in the struggle for the nation that their interests and aspirations compel. If the banners they waved then seemed to bear strange devices, it may not be too long before the armies that march under them reshape American politics on the explicitly nationalist lines that the rest of the world now finds familiar.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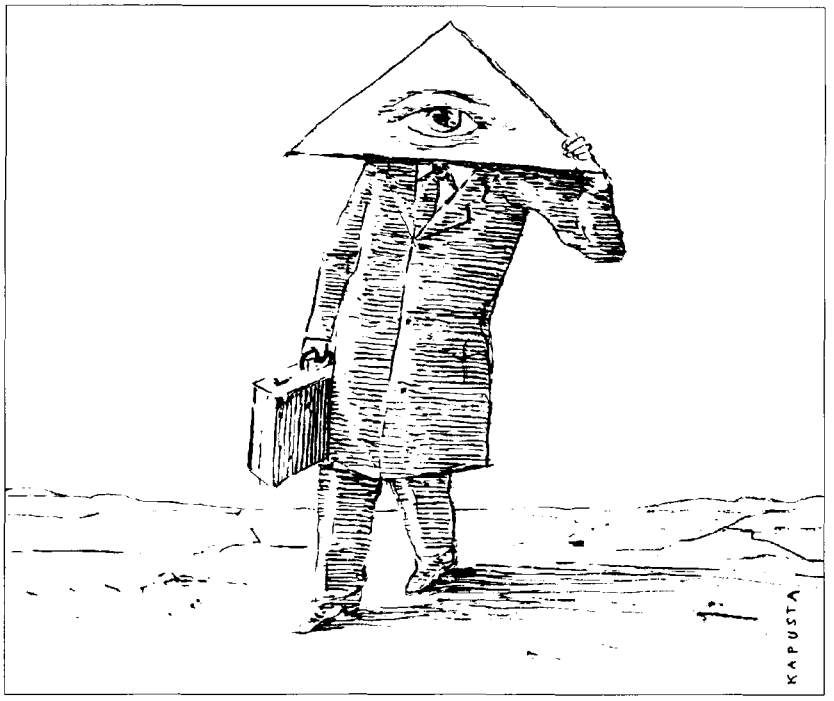

Men Unlimited

by Chilton Williamson, Jr.

The comic, as Flannery O'Connor said, is the reverse side of the terrible. I suppose the spectacle of 50 to 100 men from 20 to 70 years of age disguised in Wild Man and Coyote masks as they prance in a forest glade, beat drums, eat buffalo chili, and exorcise the demon spirits of their fathers through poetry and the contemplation of Jungian archetypes could be either, depending upon your point of view as well as your sense of humor. Betty Freidan finds it "sick," but she doesn't need a mask.

Until recently my idea of a men's movement was the Commissary Commandos, an association of males from my hometown of Kemmerer, Wyoming, that spends the long third weekend of August annually on four-wheel-drive safari in the mountains, camping, eating, drinking Jack Daniel's through a bugle, playing cards and horse shoes, firing guns, and initiating new members by an agonizing ritual with which every range cow is intimately familiar. Since then I have realized that for my fellow Commandos and me to aspire to kinship with so enlightened a brotherhood would be presumptuous. While Jack Daniel's, Jim Beam, Fleischmann's, Boone's Farm, Coors, Anheuser-Busch, and Cutty Sark guarantee absolutely to make everyone a King, Warrior, and Wild Man for at least 72 hours, none of us is all that familiar with the Jungian reality underlying these archetypal characters. Also our many father-and-son pairs show no particular interest in exorcising one another. Confronted by the Commissary Commandos in the raw, Robert Bly, father of the so-called mythopoetic men's movement, would surely murmur, echoing T.S. Eliot, "That is not what I meant—that is not what I meant, at all."

Nor is the men's movement—with the exception of small and uninfluential contingents—what feminists of both sexes assume it to be, either a force for counterattacking the political and judicial tyranny of organized feminism or a neo-Neanderthal conspiracy to round up nubile American females, hit them on the head with a club, and drag them by their hair back to home and hearth. In fact, it is a transparent ploy aimed at denying the necessity for such actions, which the men's movement, as merely another program of consciousness-raising in Native American drag, is not manly enough to perform.

In a sane and healthy society, consciousness-raising, rather than elevate consciousness, would raise hackles; in a supersane and disgustingly healthy one, it would raise leveled pistols as well. Healthy societies are unified communities, and unified communities produce individuals who are also persons whose psyches are intact because their view of the universe and of the reality behind it is predisposed by the ability to comprehend existence in the round. But ours is an insane and sick society that not only refuses to recognize ontological wholeness but denies the possibility of such a thing. Naturally this refusal makes people desperate and miserable, causing them to shop for therapists and support groups chosen according to whatever self-identity is uppermost in their minds: gay, straight, black, white, son, daughter, vegetarian, meat-eater, victim, oppressor, man, woman. In these matters, the conviction is that self-fulfillment—the secular equivalent of personal salvation—comes in selecting a dominant or simply preferred aspect of oneself and subjecting it to a single-minded course of rigorous development such as might be designed for an Olympic athlete in training to raise the Parthenon with his left foot. In physi-

Chilton Williamson, Jr., is senior editor for books at Chronicles.

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cal terms the result of such a program is a freak of nature, while in mental ones the program itself is comparable to treating a schizophrenic with a powerful drug devised to subdivide his already divided personality. The aim of consciousness-raising is a society in which everyone is a protected minority though never a minority of one, which is, after all, the meaning of "individual" in the most honorable sense of the term. The typical men's movement apostle on retreat in the wilds of West-chester County is conscious of himself as a participant in a variety of identities, which in ascending order would be: (unappreciated) Trickster, (abused) Son, (uninitiated) Male. The notion that he is, first and foremost, a human being probably never crosses his masked mind.

Aristotle and Aquinas taught their philosophical descendants that manliness is merely the human male's achievement of the fullest humanity, womanliness the human female's. Greek philosophers and Catholic theologians—and confessors—have always known that the determined quest for human perfection is the means by which this humanity is finally obtained. But this wisdom not only appeals to the modern mind, absorbed in scientism and technique, as hopelessly simplistic; it also strikes it as being exceedingly demanding, which it certainly is. Before I became a Catholic, I imagined that writing a good book was the most difficult task I could ever face in my life; now I know that being a good man is. Which brings me to another unpleasant subject, that of work. The English word virtue has as its root the Latin word *vir*, meaning man. And *Labor est Virtus*, as my Episcopal school motto went.

Fran Lebowitz, the New York social critic and humorist, remarked some years ago that her father, by wearing a three-piece suit and fedora to the office every morning, registered his idea of work as serious business, unlike the businessman of today who commonly arrives at his place of work attired in a sports shirt and slacks, or even shorts. "Work," Mencken said, "is the only solution": not just the sole anodyne for the cosmic pain that seeps through every human life, but the activity that most directly and efficiently makes a man or woman fully human—Christian moralists say by participating in the creative action of the Divine Being Who made them in His image. Of course, this conception of work as a process—of self-discovery, self-dedication, and therefore true self-fulfillment—is today an outworn and strictly unfashionable one except among feminists, who have performed a miracle by resurrecting the old male myth of stock-broking and corporate lawyering as socially useful and humanly rewarding careers. ("Sensitive" men for decades now have suffered what Walker Percy called "fugue states" in the middle of such careers, bailed out, and devoted their time to golfing or existentialist philosophy instead.) Otherwise work has been degraded to a 40-hour week of boredom and frustration tolerated for the sole purpose of having enough money to stay soused through the weekends and make payments on the new car, the condominium, and the VCR.

But this matter of work does suggest that the mythopoetic men's movement, like so many bizarre contemporary programs, represents another silly response to a legitimately diagnosed complaint. The thesis of Robert Bly's *Iron John*, a genuinely interesting book, is that corporate industrialism has alienated fathers from their sons, both physically and spiritually, while indefinitely postponing the initiation into manhood that all male youth desire and that is in fact necessary for them to become men. Deprived of the workaday presence of their fathers, young males come to suspect the abstract work performed distantly by adult males, which they finally see as something evil (multinational corporations, the CIA, the Pentagon) and indeed are so; denied the ritual initiation of pre-industrial cultures, they remain for most or even all of their lives the tender, callow youths—"soft men," Bly calls them, or naifs—that corporate society desires, encourages, and requires. If it often seems that we live in a country where there are altogether too many boys and far too few men, Bly argues, our perception is accurate enough. The Commonwealth of Peter Pan is not the same thing as Queer Nation.

What Robert Bly and the men's movement perceive to be lacking in American and indeed contemporary men everywhere is best described as *vitality*, a quality that is being squeezed from the human psyche—but especially perhaps from the *male* human psyche—by the wine-press of Americanism, otherwise known as Modernism.

The Rocky Mountain press gave considerable coverage last summer to the increasing regional problem involving people—most of them non-Westerners—having to be rescued by expensive technological means (usually helicopters) from dangerous or daredevil expeditions in rugged wilderness country after they had attempted to scale mountain faces or ski down glaciers or simply exposed themselves to natural conditions of which they had no previous experience. From mountaineering to bunjee-cord jumping, the past ten years or so have witnessed a dramatic increase in the number of sportsmen participating in hazardous activities whose rewards include, beyond cheap thrills, pride in performing feats of personal courage or the satisfaction of an experience more existentially real than those afforded by everyday life.

Part of the appeal is simply the chance to escape the boredom that afflicts all decadent societies, but most of it reflects the process—steady, inexorable, with no end in sight—of denaturalization, characterized and accompanied by suburbanization, homogenization, technologization, centralization, and abstractionism that is a crucial aspect of American decline. People who lead strenuous outdoor lives in their daily work—ranchers, game wardens, loggers, oil field roughnecks, professional hunters—do not deliberately put themselves at risk, either on the job or in their private activities: only computer programmers, ad executives, and other epicene creatures do.

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Bly is onto something when he insists that it is necessary for a man, at some stage in his life, to make contact with the "Wild Man" within him if he is to discover and cultivate the fierceness (not aggressiveness) of spirit without which he can never truly be a man at all. Unfortunately, there is scarcely any opportunity in modern life to confront the Wild Man, and parents, teachers, career counselors, employment officers, social workers, cops, the BATF, the FBI, and politicians representing the two major parties offer pointed strictures against Wild Man behavior. What we need, says Bly, echoing Edward Abbey (who didn't need a men's movement), is more wilderness.

Last fall the *Casper Star-Tribune* printed some remarks by an employment specialist who had traveled from Denver to Cheyenne to give helpful advice to the young of the Cowboy State. Forget mining, forget ranching, forget timbering, forget roughnecking, the gentleman said or implied. There's a whole new exciting world out there, but you gotta be smart and resilient in order to survive in it; gotta get that algebra and calculus down; gotta master those computers; gotta learn about the psychology of interpersonal relations, personnel management, the Role of the Corporation in Modern Society, and Making the World Safe for Corporations! Do that, and you got it made! A great career is in store for you in—*the 1-800 number*!

Put aside for the time being such "practical" (though the word isn't of course a neologism, it is used like one throughout the American educational system) questions as whether anybody without half a million dollars can set up as a rancher these days or whether two decades from now coal mining will have become so thoroughly automated that only robots will need apply. The issue is, young people who even a generation or two ago could look forward to active and spacious lives driving cattle and doctoring calves, breaking horses, supplying mountain sheep camps, tripping drill pipe, hauling logs out of the mountains with a team and sled, dynamiting rock formations, shooting grizzly bears and wolves, cutting wood, irrigating crops, putting up hay, tracking rustlers and arresting them, reforesting mountain slopes—all these tasks performed with the wind, soft or biting, in their faces, the warm sun on their hands and shoulders, and God's good earth under their feet (or their horses' hooves) where for the men and women of the American West it was and still is meant to be—are now solemnly advised to spend their adult lives planted on their butts in a climatically controlled office on the 20-something floor of a high-rise building in a futuristic Cheyenne or Casper, dressed in the regulation yuppy uniform and plugged into an electronic maze connecting them unmercifully for eight hours a day (45 minutes off for lunch) with America's 250 million-person consumariat. Is the availability of technological and other baubles worth requiring human beings to immolate their essential humanity in the production and delivery of such trifles? What sort of society expects—in fact requires—its young to seek fulfillment and happiness in devoting their working lives to 1-800? The answer is a crazy society; a sick and degenerate and despiritualized society. A society that has lost all contact with and awareness of the reality of human existence and of the world itself—its meaning, its richness, its purpose. A society that deserves to perish, and indeed has little hope of escaping death.

What Robert Bly and the men's movement perceive to be lacking in American and indeed contemporary men everywhere is best described as *vitality*, a quality that is being squeezed from the human psyche—but especially perhaps from the *male* human psyche—by the wine-press of Americanism, otherwise known as Modernism. Bly's mistake, and that of his followers, is to treat the crisis as essentially a psychological one, to be solved first by coming to terms with the inadequacies of one's father (when were fathers ever adequate?) and then by making an accommodation of sorts with the tyranny of technocratic society in alliance with the corporate state. But the solution is not Jungian psychology fortified by drumming in the woods: it is revolution, never a job for soft, oversensitized, solipsistic men. And what kind of revolution might that be? Probably not—not necessarily anyway—one with guns and prisons and guillotines; more likely a passive rebellion such as the one Wendell Berry in his new book *Sex, Economy, Freedom & Community: Eight Essays* (available from Pantheon and a small work of genius, by the way) advocates: a gradual withdrawal of our attentions and activities from the imperial periphery established by corporate industrialism to the locus of our lives, the placed communities in which we live; the refusal to tolerate longer the public concept of existence and the determination to embrace the communitarian one for the purpose of recreating community, without which sanity, independence, freedom, and, therefore, happiness are impossible. We will breed real men again when we will breed real women to match them, and we will have both when we shall have got rid of the obfuscatory infrastructure of an increasingly obscene syphilization whose unspoken intent is to castrate and humiliate every man, wild or soft, who dares to stand in its way. ·c·

Memo to a Men's Movement Recruit

by Katherine McAlpine

Its escapades make women
giggle among our chums—
"Lester? Imagine *him* in
war paint and whacking drums!"—

then laugh ourselves half sick
at the peculiar notion
that you have to hold a stick
to talk about emotions.

Sure, sometimes feminism
has gone too far. But still, you're
only extending the schism
by acting even sillier.

So put the breech-clout away
and leave those Levis on.
You're sweet, but I may say
you ain't no Iron John.

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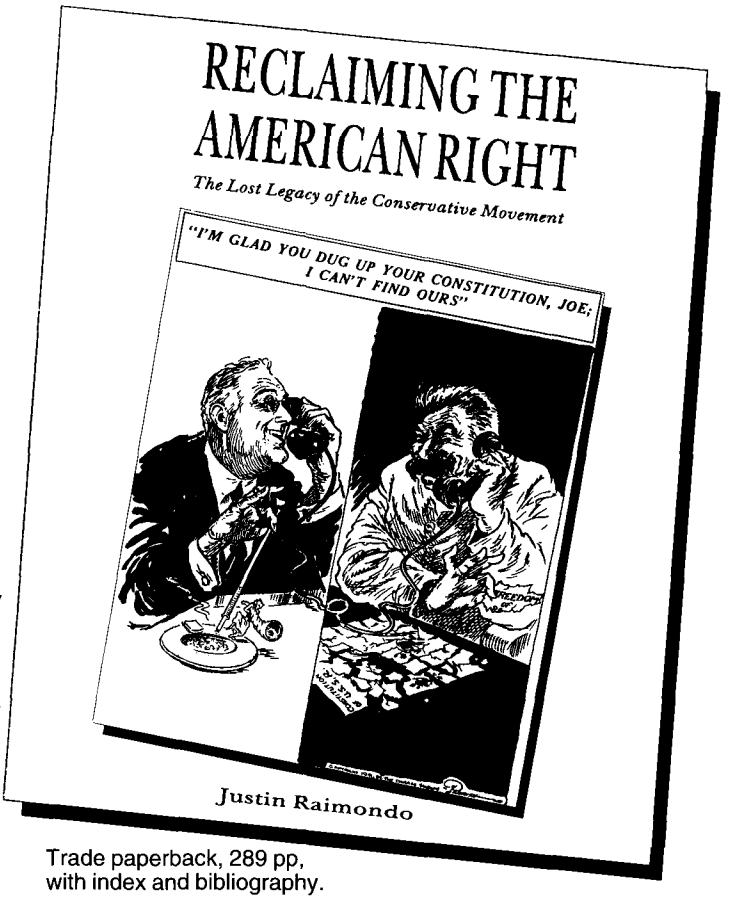
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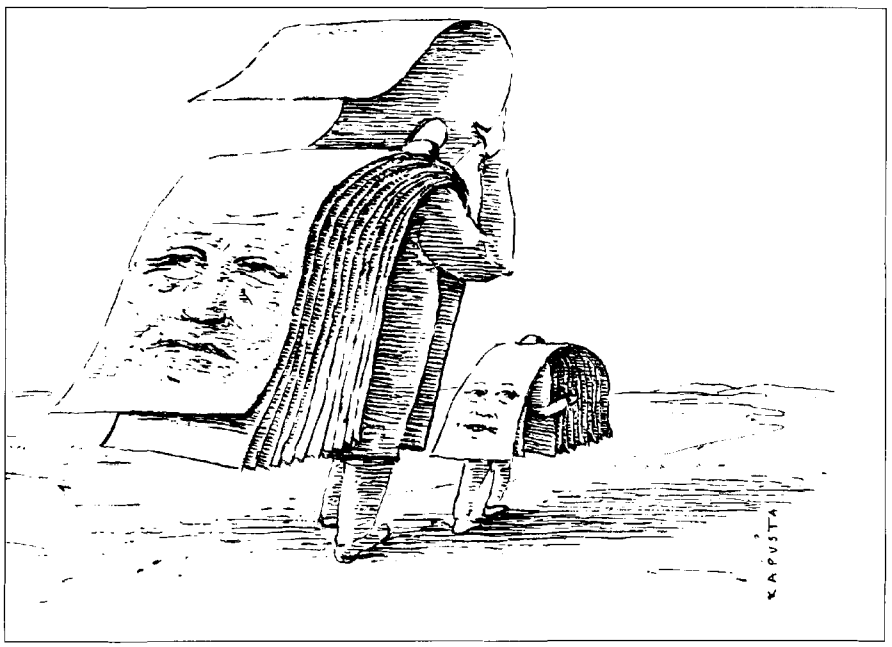
My Old Man

by Thomas Fleming



"Sometimes it's hard to be a woman." God knows, Tammy Wynette had hard times to complain of, but if being a woman is difficult at the end of the millennium, becoming a man has always been hard. Increasingly, as I look at males of my own age, to say nothing of "guys" in their teens and 20's, the whole thing seems impossible. The entire century looks like one long adolescent male whine, from Alec Waugh's *The Loom of Youth* to J.D. Salinger's *The Catcher in the Rye* to Richard Farina's *Been Down So Long it Looks Like Up to Me* to the feeble whimperings of Jay McInerney and the other quasi-male members of the bratpack. In retrospect, it is easy to admire Hemingway for his virility, but as my own father pointed out to me very early in my reading career, real men do not talk about being real men any more than saints think of themselves as saintly. The real thing is always unconscious of itself; the genuine article is always naive.

My father was a hard man to emulate: a great shot, a legendary fisherman, a man who could be as dangerous with his fists as he was abusive with his tongue. I have inherited the tongue as well as his taste for whiskey. One or the other is sure to kill me.

From everything I have heard of my father as a young man, he was as much the playboy as the hero of one of his favorite plays. A brilliant student, he got himself expelled from school, mostly for insolence. But for all his early days as a roistering merchant seaman, he had a puritanical streak when it came to women, and a Catholic regard for modesty and honesty. And yet, he refused to set foot in the Church of his ancestors until my mother converted to Catholicism in order to drag him in. Of course, his favorite drinking companion was a two-fisted monsignor who, even in the 1960's, would expel improperly attired women from church.

His intellectual hero was Mencken, whom he knew slightly in his youth. Accused of prejudice, he would inevitably paraphrase the master: "Take away a man's prejudices, and what is there left?" Whatever side of the political divide he happened to be on, my father would be at the barricade he had erected between himself and the forces of darkness. Like so many men who see the world in terms of black and white, he saw everything in red down to some time in the 40's. Despite a defective heart, he volunteered repeatedly for the marine corps during World War II but ultimately had to content himself with being a merchant officer on convoy ships. The inability to shoot back must have driven him half crazy, and it is sure that one disastrous trip, on which his ship leaked so much oil it was expelled from the convoy, triggered the ulcers that were to torment him the rest of his life.

Whether it was over German music or American politics, the old man was never known to pass up a good fight. As a red organizer for the National Maritime Union, he was there when Joe Curran was axed in the back; indeed, he was beaten to the ground trying to protect the NMU leader. As time went on, he mellowed considerably, becoming a kind of conservative in politics and accommodating, to the point of deference, to my mother. One of the last pieces of advice I received was that I should not always try to have the last word with a woman, especially with a woman I was married to.

I suppose I inherited my horror of marital infidelity and divorce from my father. A man is only as good as his word, he would say, and if he breaks that word he is nothing. It had nothing to do with what the priests taught. A man who cheated on his wife made himself a cheat in his own eyes. My moth-

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er told me she never doubted him, even when she received a telephone call warning her that her husband was out late with a showgirl. As it turned out, some less perfect husbands had used my father's reputation for fidelity as an alibi.

He was not an easy father. Stern and exacting in all the things he cared about, he had no patience with a boy who could not keep from getting a backlash just as he was about to hook a huge northern. Playing noisily and unconsciously in the afternoon, we hushed immediately when the dreaded words, "Your father's home," were spoken. If only I could inspire that degree of respect. As a small child, I remember playing with my father and being called foolish nicknames. As I grew older, the fun came to an end, and we found ourselves arguing about politics and literature. He was an individualist; I stood for community and tradition. His idea of folk music was Richard Dyer-Bennet singing Beethoven's setting of Burns and Scott; I played Dylan or Guy Carawan. I was all for civil rights; he said he had been there, and all it now amounted to was the government telling small businessmen what to do. I went in for philosophy; he preferred history and polemics. He once remarked sarcastically, knowing I was an atheist, that I was the first man in my family to have a supernatural bent. "But," I protested, "I thought there were bishops and even cardinals in the family." He conceded there were, "but none of them believed anything supernatural."

Visiting a town where we had once lived, I ran into several of my father's acquaintances. "You're his son? He was a real S.O.B," went the response half the time. Other times it was, "He was the greatest guy I have ever known." Even in old age, my father could walk into a hotel bar in Mexico City and within 15 minutes strike up a friendship with the proprietor of a distant hacienda who would offer to take him there, along with my mother, in his private plane.

Alternatively, he might provoke someone into taking a swing. Nearing 70, my father was standing in front of a sporting goods store in Atlanta with a group of even older men, mostly ex-baseball players. A pair of bikers in their early 20's approached them, mocking and threatening the old men. My father, I was later told by one of his friends, held up one hand to say "Come no further," and when one biker kept coming with raised fist, my old man decked him with one punch. His friend wisely ran away.

Like most of the men in my family of whom I have heard, my father was better at making money than keeping it. Nonetheless, he was a good provider and died in comfortable circumstances. In his last years, he used to say that he never feared losing all he had, because he knew that he could walk into any city of the world and get a job, any job, and work himself up to running the operation within a few months. If this was vainglory, it is the vainglory of a free man who, even if he finds himself working for an employer, knows in his heart that he will quit rather than endure insult.

There was a great deal wrong with the men of my father's generation. They were less educated than their own forebears and more prone to credulity, easily duped by schemes that would have struck the men of earlier ages as ludicrous: socialism in all its forms including National Socialism, sentimentalism toward strangers, preposterous theories of human equality. My father, in his youth, apparently believed in women's rights; my mother, on the other hand, was convinced that female suffrage was a mistake. That she had herself voted for John Kennedy because he seemed nicer than Mr. Nixon seemed to clinch the case.

It was my father's generation that installed FDR as dictator and backed him as he dragged the nation into war; it was they who suffered the infamous tyranny of the withholding tax that confiscates our wages before we receive them and forces us to beg for the return of what is ours. And yet, looking back at them from this age of iron, they seem like heroes. Sure enough of their manhood not to crow about it, they could afford to tolerate homosexuals, because they did not fear them. One of my earliest memories is of staying home to keep my father company. He had been badly burned in a fight with several men who wanted to have a good time picking on my effeminate (and homosexual) piano teacher. To teach him not to defend queers, they held his arm down on a red hot stove until they had burned off the skin.

For most boys today, their life is endless bullying by well-intentioned schoolmarms who work night and day to exterminate the first signs of manliness.

For a man like my father, the piano teacher was simply a friend, a cultivated man in a community of savages. Homosexuality he regarded as a nauseating vice, but other people's vices were, for the most part, none of his concern. Today, I am not sure which movement would offend him more: gay rights or the men's movement, both of them bizarre deformations of virility. More than either, I think he would have despised the cult of machismo, to say nothing of the self-fetishists, the body-builders. Most conservatives like Arnold Schwarzenegger's movies, but there must be something a little odd about a man who would want to look like a freak, much less devote years of his life to the process. In Arnold's defense it can be said that his fetish made him rich, but in the end he supported George Bush against Pat Buchanan, something no entirely normal man could conceive of.

My father has been gone for a decade, and as badly as he botched the job of fatherhood, I know I am doing a worse job. In looking at the boys my sons' age, I see as little hope for their generation as for my own. Perhaps less. For most boys today, their life is endless bullying by well-intentioned schoolmarms who work night and day to exterminate the first signs of manliness. When they do assert themselves, it is almost always in some bizarre and perverse form, as semi-professional high school athletes or as skinheads and punks. In their eyes, the choice is either mindless conformity or sadistic rebellion; victimization or racism; careerism or the gang. As a father, I pray they will choose the safe route, but as my father's son and his father's grandson, I know that it will be a long and difficult time before they find themselves as men, and if and when they do, everything they think and do will probably be against the law. ◦C◦

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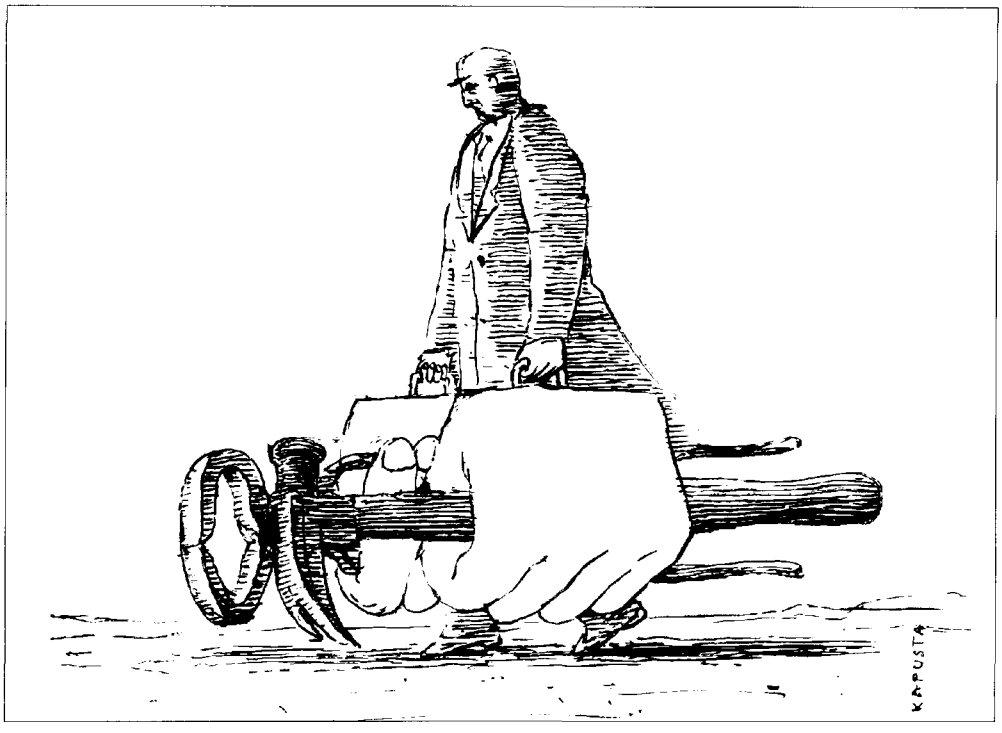
The Vanishing Craftsman

A Cultural Barometer

by Wayne Allensworth



The house is barely six months old, but it has already begun to settle. Loose steps creak, doors hang, and cracks appear along the baseboards. If I were a carpenter, as my father was for 40 years, or knew enough of such things, I would have built my own house, as he did. But I am "educated" and therefore helpless by comparison. Though I can barely drive a nail, I am my father's son and through him have absorbed enough of practical things to know that though the steps creak and the doors hang on the doorjambs and the baseboards are cracked, it is not a bad house by today's standards. Plywood, not particle board—which is really not "board" at all, but sawdust and woodchips bonded by glue and pressed into a wafer—make up the floors and roof. Porcelain sinks and bathtubs and a certain vault-like firmness attest to the basic integrity of the house.

Still, as Daddy points out on a visit, corners have been cut. The basement's copper water lines are merely stapled to the two-by-fours bracing the ceiling; the cracking paint on the porch and the loose stair rail tell the tale: shoddy work, a half-assed job is what he sees, and what seems all too obvious to me now. He is a little disgusted—this is an erector-set house, prefabricated, and even though it is not too bad as they go nowadays, a blind man could see in a minute that, to the men who built it, it was just a job, like digging a ditch or filling one, to be finished in a hurry. There is not a scintilla of the craftsmanship, the care, and the rich solidness of Daddy's work. This house has the ephemeral quality of a paint-by-numbers reproduction next to the master's original. It is a cheap, shiny Earl Scheib paint-job next to a mint-condition restoration. Daddy's houses, and his winding stair rails and cabinets, were built to *last*, to leave a man's mark. The men who built this house left no part of themselves in it.

If, as standard history textbooks have so often told us, the decline of a civilization is traceable through the marked decline in skills and knowledge we associate with master craftsmen (as well as through political demagoguery, social decadence, and educational deterioration) and manifests itself in the production of less workmanlike products in the arts and trades, then the shoddy "housing units" being thrown up nowadays are but a piece of a larger picture. The carelessness, the loss of a sense of accomplishment and permanence, and the generally shoddy work being done on the nation's building sites are symptomatic of a society dominated by a short-sighted, throw-away ethic that seems incapable of seeing anything lasting or worth preserving in the traditional American cultural milieu. Flimsy houses, strip malls that are filled today and emptied tomorrow, "performance art," and "educated" people who are either unable or unwilling to think for themselves (perhaps because they lack training in what was once thought of as fundamental knowledge), or even take care of themselves, are part and parcel of a larger cultural degradation.

My father, like all the skilled workingmen of his and earlier generations, learned his trade through a sort of apprenticeship, a slow accumulation of experience built on the knowledge of the craftsmen who came before him. Daddy, and men like him, are products of an accretionary process, a slow building of skills and habits. They are skeptical of slap-dash innovation, and they detest sloppiness and shortcuts. They are confident of their skills, but know their own (and have a sense of others')

Wayne Allensworth writes from Purcellville, Virginia.

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limitations. They respect competence and appreciate blunt honesty. They have a certain quality about them that is resistant to hucksterism, a quality that Hemingway called a "B.S. detector," and they thus despise lawyers and politicians and anybody else who makes a living through manipulation. They are an independent lot, these men: Daddy worked for himself and is not a man to take orders. He, like his father before him, would rather die than take charity. Though generous to a fault, he reserves pity for the contemptible. He is the descendant of yeoman farmers, Civil War veterans, and frontier lawmen, and his may have been the last generation of American men who could truly take care of themselves.

They have a certain look about them, these men, with their sinewy arms and thick, strong hands and sunburnt necks, their khaki work clothes, white T-shirts, and sweat socks. They walk a certain way and have a hard stoicism about them. All of them I knew, and know, as a Texan, had a certain way of talking, but not too much. There is an air of certainty about them as solid and lasting as the things they make with their own hands. They are strong and enduring, clannish and loyal, and they have a self-assured masculinity about them that underscores the phoniness of the pumped-up, aerobicized, self-conscious Iron John ideal of the 90's. These 90's fellows are beefy enough, but like a freezer-burnt steak, they lack character and texture. By worshipping at the right p.c. alters and dancing to the right corporate tunes, they degrade themselves and pawn off part of their manhood for a faceless society.

It is the rough individualism of men like my father, tempered by old-time religion, that built this country, that cleared the trails, fought the Indians, and endured drought and pestilence. They built their own houses, farmed their own fields, cared for their own families, and fought their own fights. They are the America not so much of Washington or Jefferson, but of Boone, Crockett, and Houston. Frontier man was the builder of the America I love, but corporate man seems incapable of building anything except his own prison, or even of sustaining what has been built.

The men who built this house do not look like my father, nor do they, I dare say, think like him. Many of them, and on some days most of them, don't even speak English, not even the Appalachia cum Chisholm Trail Texan I grew up with, nor do they want to. Some muck about in cut-offs, their ponytails flapping around behind them, their jam-boxes blaring eardrum-numbing rock "music" or babbling in foreign tongues, as they wield their air guns and staplers, the spit and ceiling wax of modern construction work. They are busy building the homogenized, steam-rollered land of America after the Americans, the throw-away, disposable, fast-food "nation" of strip malls and houses that crumble within a decade.

Both liberals—who dream of the "universal nation," that tower of Babel united only through a common hatred of the West and disdain for standards—and "conservatives"—who idealize the politics of "development" and "growth" and see Americans as united only by a love of material gratification—are these usurpers' champions. Both are helping to hasten the extinction of men like my father, and with them, the America both of Washington and Jefferson *and* of Boone, Crockett, and Houston. They swear that the wet-backed invaders share our "American values" and that the ponytailed trash, men who have not taken the time to master their trade, are doing all of us a service. That is the way these folks, the liberals and conservatives who grow increasingly indistinguishable from one another, think: they think that foreigners who tell polltakers that they "believe in" abstractions like "democracy" or "capitalism" have as much claim on this country as American citizens, that building "housing units" is the same as building a home, and that being an American is like being a member of a club that anybody can join. To these "mainstream" liberals and conservatives, "culture" *means* ideological adherence to abstractions; national character is *defined* by shopping habits and not by all the things that are lost when men like my father are run out of business and become extinct, when a way of life that includes the look of a people, the way they carry themselves, the clothes they wear, the foods they eat, and the way they speak is forgotten.

When all these things are displaced by artificial fashions and fads, when craftsmen are replaced by fly-by-nights and foreigners with no sense of permanency or belonging, then America will become a purely geographic entity, a country but not a nation, whose disposable culture and deracinated people will bear as much resemblance to the land of Washington, Jefferson, Boone, Crockett, and Houston as the inhabitants and culture of Hosni Mubarach's Egypt do to the land of the Pharaohs. c

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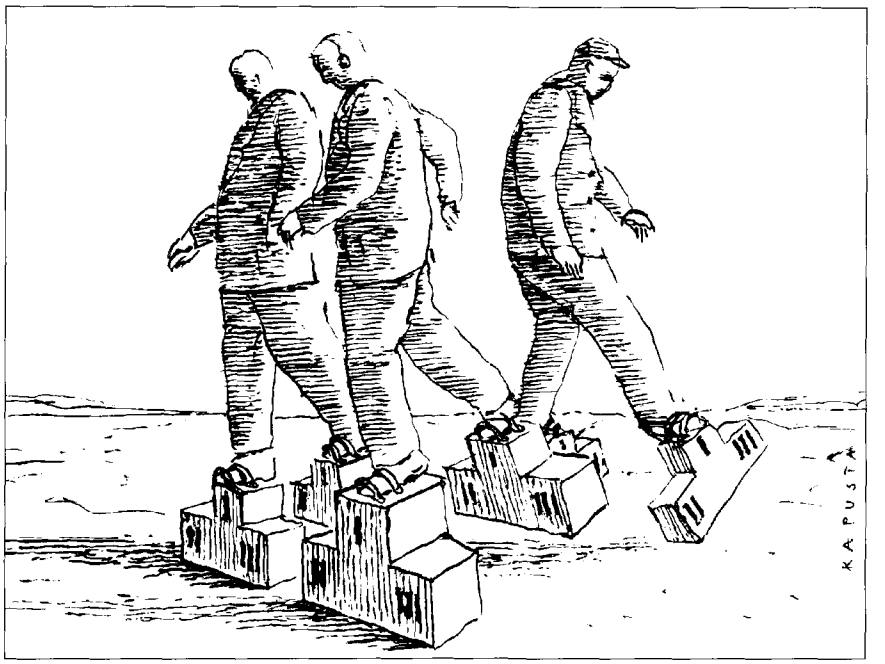
Games and the Man

by Harold O.J. Brown

"Remember thou, that it is better far
To pull a poor oar in the third boat
Than to be captain of the basketball team."



Spoken by the editor of the *Harvard Lampoon* at freshman orientation, those words had life-changing impact on a certifiable high-school nerd from the far South. In the Dark Ages, Harvard College required that every freshman be able to swim 100 yards—not so hard for a Florida boy—and participate in athletics a minimum of three days a week. Basketball—indeed, anything that required a ball and a fair amount of coordination—being very unpromising, the poem so dramatically delivered by John P.C. "Choo Choo" Train seemed to suggest a better alternative. Unfortunately there was the dread "Step Test," officially known as the Physical Efficiency Test, which required freshmen to jump up and down on a bench for five minutes. Those who failed the test were sent, ingloriously, to the Indoor Athletic Building to do Special Exercises until they could pass it or graduated, whichever came first. This took place under the watchful eye of Norman Fradd, inventor of Fradd Ball, a kind of dodgeball played with a medicine ball for comic relief at the end of Special Exercises.

Having determined to try out for a seat in at least some freshman boat, I was subjected to the ignominy of being ordered to Special Exercises. Freshman crew was not considered an acceptable substitute for one who had failed the Step Test, so my name was pulled from the check-in board at the Newell Boat House and placed on the board in the Special Exercises Room. No, the Athletic Association had no objection to one rowing in addition to Special Exercising. Of course, it would have been highly embarrassing *not* to give one's name to the checker at the boat house as all the other freshmen out for crew were doing. Fortunately, a kindly Mr. Getchell at the H.A.A. was willing to place a duplicate name on the board at the boat house, thereby tactfully concealing the fact that this candidate was officially involved in Special Exercises.

The balance of freshman year was a passed Step Test and a seat in the not so glorious third boat. Sophomore year brought a seat in the first boat, a position that was jealously guarded through three varsity years, one victory over both Yale and Princeton (as well as one loss to each), and at least a second place in the Eastern Sprint Championships. Our coach in those years was the legendary H.H. "Bert" Haines, who had been a British sergeant-major in the Gallipoli campaign and who never subjected his crews to any verbal affront more abusive than, "Oh dear, oh dear, what idiots I have to contend with!" Bert once insisted on giving *our* racing shell to the visiting Elis, saying "You wouldn't want to win by taking unfair advantage." Whether we would have or not (we would have), the time that we gave them our shell was the one time we beat Yale for the Goldthwait Cup.

For me, this was the end of nerddom (to use a modern expression not in vogue at the time) and the beginning of a long involvement in coaching: several entries in the Henley Royal Regatta—two of them victorious—and even a couple of futile

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efforts at the Olympic trials. In those days, participants had to swear the Olympic Oath, promising never to go professional, i.e., to take money for sport. Something of the atmosphere of rowing is reflected, *mutatis mutandis*, in the movie *Chariots of Fire*: one wanted desperately to win, but of course not to give the impression of being overly concerned. Competition in track meant entry to the British upper class for the Jew Harold Abrahams; a way to glorify God for Eric Liddell. For both—and for the others—it was also something in itself.

Those amateur days, days of what former President Bush might have characterized as "kinder, gentler sport," are now gone. The Olympics no longer bring merely the coveted gold, silver, or bronze medals, but immense winner's purses and life-long advertising contracts. Avery Brundage is dead, and with him the spirit of the modern Olympics, which Pierre Courbertin thought that he had faithfully reclaimed from ancient Hellas. There, too, the "laurel wreath games" (*agones stephanitai*) were not enough: there had also to be games with valuable prizes or purses of money as rewards (*agones thematikoi or chrematitai*). Sport did not long remain entirely amateur, even among the Olympians, and there are complaints about professionalization as early as the fifth century B.C.

Games for fun—*ludi*; contests to test the absolute limits of one's strength—*agones*; sport for laurel wreaths, for gold, for medals, for money, for fame, for girls, for advertising contracts, for any or all of these reasons: all have been a serious preoccupation of boys, men, and even senior citizens from the earliest of days. Though women were involved in sports, too—as they were in Greece, although their participation is far less fully documented than men's—athletics historically play a far more central role in the life of boys and men than of girls and women, and they do so even now, although the infamous Title IX of a benevolent and all-wise government is seeking to change things. Relatives and students involved in high school and college coaching tell me that four times as many men volunteer for sports as women. But Title IX regulations are forcing schools to equalize men's and women's sports, which means that a fair number of men have to be banished from participation and a large number of women lured into it, with potential, long-range consequences for the self-image and self-esteem of various members of one or the other sex. The evidence is fairly clear, however: left to their own inclinations—whether these inclinations are by nature or by conditioning—the boys and men of the late 20th century, like the boys and men of the 30 recorded centuries past, find something fascinating and compelling in sport, both as *ludus* (game) and as *agon* (struggle).

Why are males fascinated with game and struggle? It has often been postulated, or perhaps even claimed as proven, that a woman's essential character is hers by nature, while a man's must be acquired. Whether or not this slogan is true of women, it definitely is true of boys and men that almost all of us must *do* something before we can *be* anyone or anything. Something hard, something at least a bit dangerous at times, something that enables one to define oneself in the company of one's peers.

Boys and men fight—dangerously—more readily than girls and women. Is this innate or conditioned? Whichever it is, it is a fact. Fighting, whether successfully or unsuccessfully, certainly defines a boy or a man; but serious fighting, not to mention war, is a costly way to gain definition, as it produces as many losers as winners, and given the nature of male strength, a high number of casualties. There is no slogan in modern warfare, "It matters not whether you win or lose, but how you fight the fight," to parallel the familiar "It matters not whether you win or lose, but how you play the game."

Good male friendships may develop in a variety of ways, but one of the most tried and true is when men are united in a struggle against a common enemy. It is seldom that good male friendships develop without a shared task, or, even better, a shared foe.

Sport has frequently been a way of training and preparation for military service and thus primarily a male concern. Indeed, in the Greek city-states, proficiency in sport was one way that a young man from a lower class could gain entry into the military and ultimately into a higher social status. Some events clearly have military utility, such as the javelin. Nevertheless, sport from the beginning has gone far beyond direct military utility. Although the Olympic Games included events that could be dangerous—such as the *pankration*, an "anything goes" fight—most events left the losers as well as the winners intact—exhausted, perhaps, but intact.

At least from the well-documented early days in Greece, most male sports require far more effort—sweat, tears, and occasionally blood—than any tangible profit from them can justify. The coveted laurel wreath of the Olympic victor could hardly become a keepsake or family heirloom. Of course, some events did bring a profit: a record from the fourth century names 50 amphoras of oil as first prize in a stadium race (about 400 yards). But most events did not, and, as even that early Christian sports commentator St. Paul wrote, "Know ye not that they which run in a race run all, but one receiveth the prize?" (I Corinthians 9:24). Yet all ran, and still run. How many foot-pounds of effort are expended by the tens of thousands of runners of all ages in marathons across the country, most of whom receive only a T-shirt for their efforts?

There seems to be some truth in the idea that a woman knows by nature what she is, while a man must measure himself. The goal of Greek education was to help a boy grow up *kalos kagathos* (beautiful and good), and the idea that one should cultivate a fine character to match a well-honed body was taken seriously, if not always followed. The Greeks of Homer's day competed clothed, but by the fifth century athletes, at least the males, competed naked (the girls and women usually wore something). Whatever the function of nudity in competition may have been, it seems to symbolize the idea that in a race or match the man is revealed for who he is as well as for what he can do.

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The stylized sabre-duels still fought in German student fraternities are lawful, because the law does not define them as "duels with deadly weapons," which are criminal. The German word is not "*Duell*" (which could be deadly), but "*Mensur*," from the Latin *mensura*, or measure. In some sense participation in a *Mensur* measures the man, and although blood is frequently shed, the outcome is far less deadly than the "sport" of boxing, or even football.

Some sports involve actual combat, hardly more ritualized or potentially less painful than the stylized *Mensur*. Other sports, such as basketball, permit an individual to become a star, a celebrity, a folk hero: *vide* Michael Jordan. In some sports, the contestants on the field frequently outnumber the spectators. In some, such as crew, there is no possibility for an individual to stand out at all. All must "swing together," in the words of the Eton Boating Song, or the boat will not go. It might seem that the differences between these varieties of sport are greater than the commonalities, but every sport does something to define the man. Athletes—lettermen on the college scene—have something in common, whether the letter is from football or lacrosse, track or crew (sailing, riflery, and chess fit in less well). Even our most eminent political leaders like to be seen taking part in sport, from touch football (the Kennedy brothers) and skiing (Ford) to jogging (Carter, Clinton). They win neither laurel wreaths nor gold medals in the process, but they do show that they have something elemental in common with the rest of the male half of the human race. And, of course, most sports are fun—at least much of the time.

Good male friendships may develop in a variety of ways, but one of the most tried and true is when men are united in a struggle against a common enemy. It is seldom that good male friendships develop without a shared task, or, even better, a shared foe. War is an extravagantly costly way to build friendship, although it demonstrably does that—sometimes even among military enemies. Sport can do it as effectively, less painfully, and without loss of life. Men often find it easier to fight with each other than to express love for one another, but they need to love one another, and not only the women and children in their lives. The appropriate word here is *philia* rather than *eros*, although the boundary between them is not always clear.

"Male bonding" is much talked about these days, but it existed long before the word became a catch phrase. It exists in noble and in perverted forms, and while sport is no guarantee against the kind of *eros* that Scripture condemns and tradition brands unnatural, it does offer a realm for the development of male affection that can be both deep and noble. That is a rather oblique way of saying that friendships made in sport can be among the richest and best that men can know.

Sport does not necessarily make the man, but for much of history men have hardly been made without it. ◦c

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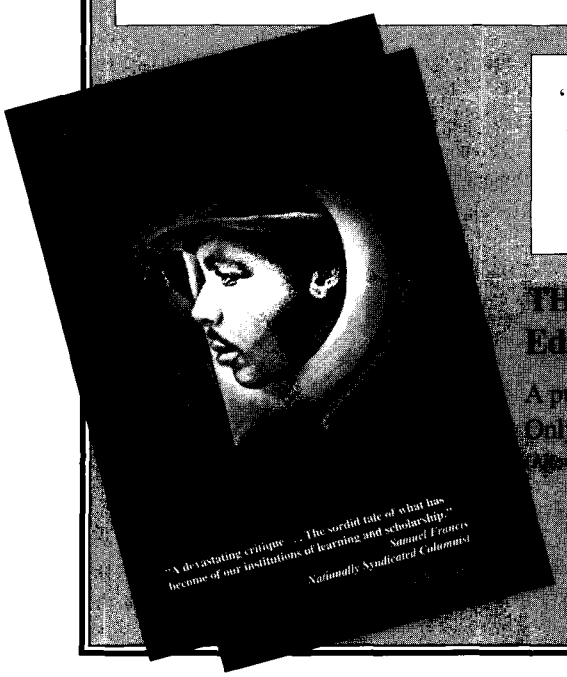
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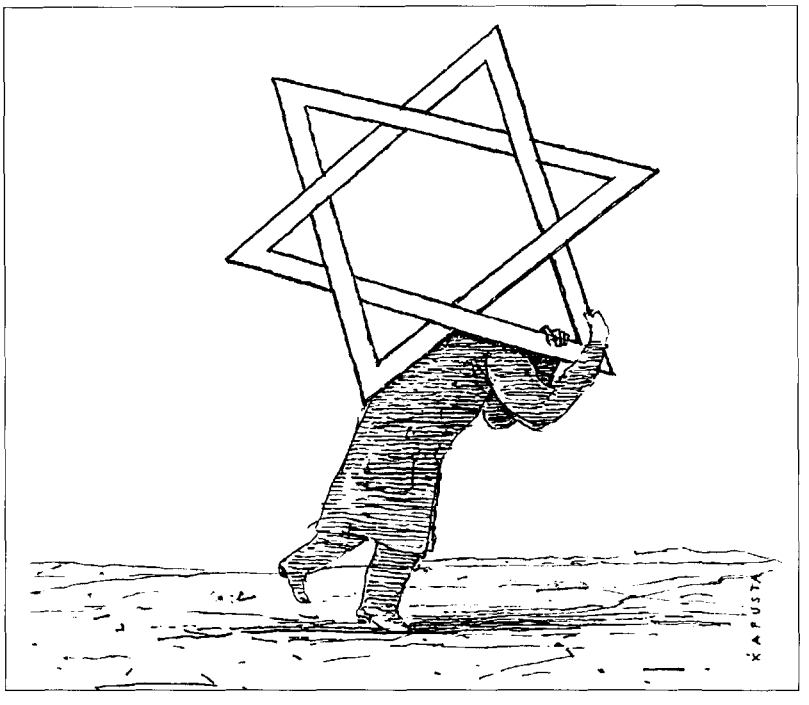
Toughs, Softs, and Jewish Masculinity

by Paul Gottfried



Jewish stereotyping is an activity in which Jews and their enemies have both engaged. Among the self-images that Jews have popularized is that of the bookish Jewish male. The medieval biblical commentator Rashi depicts the patriarch Jacob as a scholar and homebody, "in the tradition of Shem and Eber," Jacob's two Semitic ancestors to whom his qualities are also ascribed. Jacob's brother Esau was a "cunning hunter and man of the field," and he came to represent for rabbinic commentators the hostile Gentile whose way of life was decidedly non-Jewish. The contrast between Jacob and Esau was already critical for the later prophets: Malachi, for example, states that God "loved Jacob but despised Esau," who received desolation as his inheritance. The impetuous, blood-thirsty Esau became a symbol of what the descendants of Jacob were to fear, and the rabbis saw that enemy as variously incarnated in Israel's Edomite neighbors to the South (supposedly descended from Esau), the Roman Empire, and the medieval Church. All of these groups were identified with the color red, going back to Esau's association with the pot of lentils in return for which he sold his birthright to Jacob. (The Hebrew word for lentil, *adom*, can also mean red.) All of Israel's political foes, moreover, were seen as sanguinary and unreflective, in contrast to Jacob's scions, who were shown cultivating sedentary, domestic virtues.

The Jewish self-image is of course tied to the stifling of Jewish masculinity that was evident by the Middle Ages. The received view, which the Zionist movement has stressed, is that Jewish manhood was stunted by the restrictions that a hostile Christian world placed on Jewish society. This view is partly correct. The prohibitions imposed on Jews in medieval Europe—against owning land and bearing arms—prevented Jewish men from tilling the soil, practicing self-defense, and engaging in other manly pursuits. In the proverbial Jewish family of the Eastern European ghetto, the wife ran a business and the husband pored over Talmudic texts. This division of labor was both the product of prolonged social discrimination and a creative adaptation to an unfriendly environment.

But that family pattern, as Jacob Neusner demonstrates, was already there, at least embryonically, centuries before, in the Talmudic reconstruction of Jewish culture. In the face of successive defeats—the destruction of the Second Temple and of the Jewish Commonwealth and the rise of an ungrateful daughter religion—the authors and redactors of the rabbinic texts shifted the emphasis in Jewish life from national resurrection to the study and performance of detailed rituals. As this became the focus of Jewish life, it was also necessary to recreate biblical role models: thus the warrior King David is depicted as a proto-Talmudist, like the son of Noah, Shem, and Shem's grandson Eber. Anything orienting Jewish life toward military affairs is kept out of the Talmudic prescriptions: King Messiah, for example, is exalted as a future respondent to legal conundrums but never as a warrior.

These interpretive traditions are critical for understanding modern stereotypes (and self-stereotypes) of Jewish masculinity. The polarity constructed between Jacob and Esau returns in a provocative fashion in Nietzsche, for whom Jews became the destined priests of slave morality. Unlike the joyous warrior who innocently and instinctively vents hostility, Jews, Nietzsche explains, have learned to fight by cunning. They manipulate the "bad conscience" of others, which they have shaped by introducing "guilt," "sin," and other servile concepts. Jews are accused of making the West ashamed of the Hellenic worship of physical beauty and of supplanting a virile civilization with the

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ideal of self-mortification. With due respect to Nietzsche's "liberal" interpreters, these criticisms are not directed at Christians first and at Jews secondarily. True, Nietzsche deplored anti-Semitism, but he also leveled numerous attacks, particularly in his correspondence, on Judaism as the source of Christian self-debasement. He also mocked Jewish cunning and lack of aristocratic virtue.

As for the debate about the feminization of Jewish males, it might be best to pursue it under different auspices. Toughs and softs are both Jewish victimologists wearing interchangeable masks, like feminists and men's rights groups.

As a recently published French anthology of essays, *De Sils-Maria à Jérusalem: Nietzsche et le judaïsme* (edited by Dominique Bourel and Jacques Le Rider), makes clear, Nietzsche's ridicule of the Jews made a deep impression on early Zionists, who were drawn to Nietzsche for his lyrical style and anti-Christian neo-paganism. For these Zionists it was important to meet Nietzsche's criticism by reconstructing Jewish identity in a Jewish homeland. Even the socialists among these Zionists thought Nietzsche had made valid observations about the unnatural mentality of their fellow Jews, even if he had also rejected socialism and liberalism.

It is not surprising that the candidly self-hating Jew Otto Weininger, in *Sex and Character* (1903), should dwell turgidly and splenetically on the problem of feminized Jewish men. More interesting, in 1905 the father of what later became the Zionist right, Vladimir Jabotinsky, proposed as basic to his nationalist movement the achievement of Jewish remasculinization: "Our starting point is to take the typical Yid of today and to imagine his diametric opposite. Because the Yid is ugly, sickly, and lacks decorum, we shall endow the ideal image of the Hebrew with masculine beauty. The Yid is downtrodden and easily frightened, and, therefore, the Hebrew ought to be proud and independent."

Freud also read Nietzsche on the Jews and believed what he read, to the point that he sought physiological explanations for the "feminization" of Jewish males. According to Sander L. Gilman in *Freud, Race, and Gender*, the father of modern psychology long agonized over the "proneness to hysteria" and other "female qualities" that he thought typical of Jewish men. He found these qualities, which he identified with his own father, embarrassing, and he speculated on how they might be removed provided they were not part of an "immutable biological construction."

In recent years this issue of feminized Jewish males has reemerged in a different context: an intramural Jewish dispute over contemporary Jewish identity. Neither side in this dispute is particularly pro-Western: both view Western Christian society as a continuing fount of anti-Jewish sentiment. But for one side Western Christian hostility is responsible for Jewish feminization, while for the other it produced the forced masculinization of a once "sensitive" Jewish culture. The sides are presented (or present themselves) as "tough" vs. "soft," or in Yiddish, "*starke*" vs. "*schwache*." Meir Kahane's *Never Again* and Ruth Wisse's *If I Am Not for Myself: The Liberal Betrayal of the Jews* are representative of the "tough" Jews; Paul Breines' *Tough Jews: Political Fantasies and the Moral Dilemma of American Jewry* and the writings of Jewish feminist Letty C. Pogrebin exemplify the "soft" thinking.

Having forced myself to read such polemics, I am struck more by the similarities than by the differences between the two sides. Both are fixated on the insidious presence of anti-Semitism and express Jewish alienation from Gentile society, but both also reveal no positive religious elements. Wisse and Kahane, though residing in North America, scold other Jews for not recognizing Israel as their only homeland. For both of these toughs, Arab opposition to Israel is derivative of Christian anti-Semitism, which also informed the Nazi movement. As Wisse, a frequent *Commentary* contributor, puts it: "The Arab charge that the creation of Israel is a crime against an Arab people has much in common with the earlier Christian charge that the Jews denied the son of God, or that of the Nazis that the Jews polluted the Aryan race. These charges are unanswerable except through dissolution of the Jewish religion, the Jewish people, the Jewish state."

Though the softs seem to like what Wisse condemns, a "Jewish civilization of self-blame," and what Kahane presents as the "victory of Hellenism over the Jewish people," clearly the two sides agree on other matters. For toughs and softs, the victory of the left throughout the West would not be a bad thing, as long as leftist anti-Semitism were controlled. For the softs, conservative movements are inevitably unkind, anti-feminist and anti-Jewish. In Breines' words: "A critique of tough Jews ought, then, to begin and end with a summons gently to abolish the conditions that generate toughness." A continued alliance with international socialism and feminism, argue the softs, helps Jews and other oppressed minorities. It weakens traditionalist cultures in which Jews have been disadvantaged, and so Zionists should aim at cooperation with social and cultural progressives everywhere. Though Breines is more sympathetic to "feminized" Jewish males than Wisse or Kahane, his reasoning is also anchored in an appeal to Jewish self-interest. Like the toughs, Breines thinks Jewish interests are best protected where Gentiles are not allowed to be their unruly selves.

In a perceptive review of Wisse's book, Allan C. Brownfeld makes the point that "for an academician of note, Wisse's discussion of liberalism is largely superficial. She does not properly differentiate between the classical liberalism of the 19th century . . . and the statist liberalism of the 20th century." Moreover, "what seems to disturb Wisse most is the classical liberalism which ended the theocratic exclusion of Jews from the life and culture of Western Europe. She seems to long to restore the ghetto walls, which maintained the kind of artificial Jewish unity she would like once again to impose." What Brownfeld might have added is that Wisse and other Jewish toughs are producing their own Jewish counterpart to black separatism: presenting Jews as Western victims, who are to be indulged no matter what they demand, whether it is the right to

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view themselves as embattled anti-Westerners condemning their loss of collective identity or only a universal attention to their concerns. Brownfeld is right that Wisse has fewer reservations about contemporary than about classical liberalism. The old liberalism brought Jews into a European middle-class civilization that she wishes to have them forget. The new liberalism, though sometimes allied with the Palestinians, features the kind of victimology in which Wisse feels most at home.

As for the debate about the feminization of Jewish males, it might be best to pursue it under different auspices. Toughs and softs are both Jewish victimologists wearing interchangeable masks, like feminists and men's rights groups. One even finds the same Jewish figures combining soft and tough stances, e.g., Alan Dershowitz, Abe Rosenthal, and Martin Peretz, all social liberals who are Zionist hawks. Here the affinities to Afro-American nationalism are all too plain. In both cases the most militant and easily offended nationalists feel a natural pull in America toward the victimological left. That pull is subject to change only when the left favors some other victim group at the expense of one's own. But as soon as that sense of slight passes, the militant, alienated majority again aligns itself with the left.

Thus Jewish toughs and black power advocates typically identify themselves with the same political side as gays and feminists. Alienation is a stronger theme in both instances than the cult of masculinity. Both Wisse and Kahane rebuke Jewish liberals for not being sufficiently suspicious of Gentiles. Liberalism, for these toughs, would be fine, so long as it incorporated enough Jewish suspicion of Arabs and their Western Christian apologists. This tough position is entirely consistent with the liberalism it never gets around to criticizing. It is in fact parasitic on that liberalism, like black separatists and Irish American supporters of both the IRA and Ted Kennedy. Behind all these shows of masculine toughness is the same whining by self-designated victims, much of it intended for guilt-obsessed WASPs. And the point of this whining is always the same: certain victims are not getting enough attention and refuse to be Uncle Toms. This may exemplify the proneness to hysteria that Freud believed afflicted only Jewish males.

I close this essay with one critical observation about the best of the works studied in the course of my research: Paul Breines' *Tough Jews*. In a detailed discussion of American Jewish schlock, Breines notes the continuing popularity of tough Zionist novelists like Leon Uris, Gloria Goldreich, Chayym Zeldis, and Joel Gross (the most prototypical of these authors, Ben Hecht, belonged to an older generation). Such novelists appeal to aggressive Jewish nationalists in America, who are always criticizing fellow Jews as "self-hating." Breines observes the cultural resentment abounding in some Zionist novels, which invariably treat German Jews as Uncle Toms and the old Protestantized American Jewish elite as even worse. The aesthetic and moral judgments here are certainly sound, but Breines ascribes too much of a consistent rightist gestalt to his subjects. Are they psychological "fascists," as he seems to suggest, or just too contradictory and too trivial to be assigned ideological labels?

And was that ardent Europeanist and despiser of communism, Zev Jabotinsky, the spiritual ancestor of the tough Jews who read and write hyper-Zionist schlock? The pre-World War I generation of tough Jews whom Breines cites faced real existential and cultural problems: their identification with Western thought in a society that was largely non-Westernized and the task of transforming that society, to which they felt morally and ancestrally bound, into something that they could admire and that also would survive its enemies. In no sense did Jabotinsky, a multilingual novelist who felt at home in most of Europe, foreshadow the American ghettoized schlepp who reads Goldreich, Zeldis, and perhaps Ruth Wisse: i.e., one who gets macho kicks out of accounts about how Israelis shoot Arabs or capture Nazi scientists before attending meetings of NOW with his opinionated, bleached-blond wife. Breines' genealogy is wrong for at least two reasons: first, he goes too far in demonizing Jabotinsky's and Freud's Jewish self-criticism, and then he assigns too much theoretical importance to those who are better left to satirists. As one Austro-German Jew to another, I would urge Breines to lighten up and take schlepps less seriously.

Keeping Up With Political Correctness
A Partial Guide for the Socially Perplexed

by Katherine McAlpine

A "drunken Indian," you said? That's worse in
polite society than a lewd curse. In-
stead, "say substance-dependent indigenous person."

*

"Gay rights" is non-inclusive. Gay's just guys.
One who is conscientious specifies
he/she supports gays, lesbians, and bi's.

*

Not surgery or flu! Now get this straight:
"recovering" can simply indicate
somebody's read a self-help book of late.

*

"God" is a sexist concept. If you must
mention a deity, try to adjust
to "Source of All." No one will be nonplussed.

*

T-shirts are social suicide when they
endorse Old Glory or the NRA.
Rainforests, whales, and pandas are okay.

*

Don't light a cigarette, don't order steak,
do not wear fur or (if you're female) make-
up. And no satiric humor, for Christ's sake!

*

We know you try to mind your manners, but
if the amenities still aren't clear-cut,
better stay home and keep your big mouth shut.

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From There to Here—And Back Again

by Richard Lessner

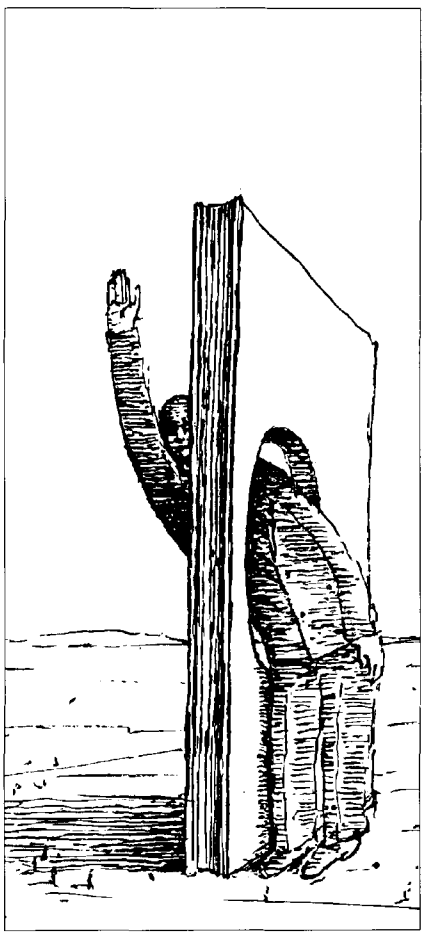
"All great peoples are conservative; slow to believe in novelties; patient of much error in actualities; deeply and forever certain of the greatness that is in law, in custom once solemnly established, and now no longer recognized as just and final."

—Thomas Carlyle

Reclaiming the American Right: The Lost Legacy of the Conservative Movement
by Justin Raimondo
Burlingame, California: Center for Libertarian Studies;
289 pp., $17.95

◆

As the Clintons' socialist steamroller grinds out new programs, new entitlements, higher taxes, more regulation, and ever larger deficits, conservatives are left scratching their scalps: How is it that, after recapturing the White House and holding executive power for more than a decade, conservatives failed to make a dent in the explosive growth of Big Government and that, after a dozen years of Ronald Reagan and George Bush, the power of the federal government to invade nearly every aspect of our lives through confiscatory taxation, burgeoning social welfare schemes, and invasive regulation is greater than ever? Libertarian Justin Raimondo argues that, unless conservatives are willing to confront the ghosts of their intellectual past, they will fail to understand just where their movement went astray. With the wreckage of the failed Bush presidency littering the political landscape, it cannot be said that there exists today a discrete entity deserving of the appellation "conservative movement." Conservatives are united in nothing, not even in the traditional credo of limited government, and their ranks are riven by internecine warfare as vicious as that which currently



Janusz Kapusta

bathes the hapless Balkans in blood.

Raimondo, a Media Fellow of the Ludwig von Mises Institute, argues that the causes of the conservative movement's ignominious failure are internal, to be found in successive "invasions" of the Old Right from the left—invasions that so co-opted and corrupted the movement that it ceased to be truly conservative in any fundamental sense. These intrusions altered the *ideology* of the conservative movement, while preserving its *form*.

In Raimondo's analysis, the Old Right—typified by such stalwarts as the *Saturday Evening Post*'s Garet Garrett, John T. Flynn, Senator Robert A. Taft, H.L. Mencken, A.J. Nock, and FDR's *bêtes noires*, Colonel Robert McCormick and his *Chicago Tribune*—espoused values of individualism, anti-statism, *laissez-faire*, and libertarianism at home and isolationism and a wariness of foreign entanglements abroad. The first invasion of these ranks, Raimondo suggests, issued from the Trotskyite left. These new recruits, demoralized by the failures and barbarity of Stalinist Marxism, migrated to the Old Right, whose anti-communism was attractive to them; they soon set about rearranging the furniture in their new home. This trend, the first of three invasions of the Old Right roughly following generational lines, began late in the 1930's—the "Red Decade"—and culminated in the mid-50's. Led by ex-Trotskyite James Burnham and William F. Buckley's *National Review* (its early masthead heavily weighted with erstwhile communists), the New Right retained the globalist outlook of its Marxian ancestry as it preemptively sacrificed the fight against the rise of the total state—which the Old Right had waged so gallantly against the New Deal—on behalf of the Manichean struggle against international communism.

The results were catastrophic for the conservative movement, which, cut from its origins, was transmogrified into something unrecognizable. Having identified the fight against communism as the transcendent imperative, the New Right willfully acquiesced in the growth of the omnicompetent, custodial social welfare state. Its homage to limited government, defined by Mencken as "one

Richard Lessner, formerly deputy editor of the editorial pages at the Arizona Republic, *has recently finished a second novel.*

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which barely escapes being no government at all," continued to receive casual lip service, but little else: everything, even liberty itself, became expendable in the eschatological contest with communism. Indeed, a collectivist state with imperialist pretensions and an economy fixed permanently on a war footing were precisely what was needed in the apocalyptic fight to the death with Sino-Soviet communism.

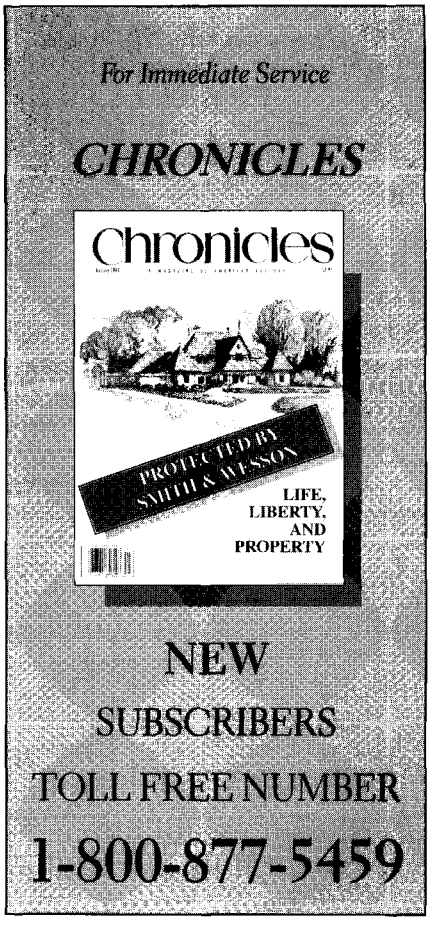
The second invasion of conservative territory came in the 1960's and 70's, as yet another gang of disaffected Marxists joined up. The so-called neoconservatives, characterized by such figures as Irving Kristol and Norman Podhoretz, had perhaps forsaken their faith in socialism and discovered that they felt more at home in *National Review* than in *Ramparts*. But they retained a residual distaste for capitalism and evinced a positive infatuation with the New Deal and the Europeanized social-welfare state it had produced. These are the oxymoronic "big-government conservatives" who in the 80's coalesced into a powerful clique within the conservative movement. The neoconservatives are quite willing—even eager—to use conservative means to achieve liberal ends, and their outlook was—and remains—global and imperial. It is this faction of the conservative wing that spouts globaloney about a Pax Americana, the "end of history," the unipolar superpower world, the triumph of the managerial revolution, and the messianic mission to preserve and protect "democracy" from Kuwait to Somalia to Haiti.

Raimondo argues persuasively (at least for me) that with the co-optation and corruption of the right the American political dialogue has tilted decisively, perhaps fatally, in favor of statism. Indeed, the "dialogue" has become a monologue. What remains of contemporary conservatism, save conservation of the social welfare advances enacted by the Democratic Party's permanent legislative majority? Most conservatives holding (and desperate to retain) coveted positions of power and privilege have swallowed the notion that the American state is and should be no different from its European cousins: provider, protector, and policeman not only of its own crime-ridden streets and growing underclass of welfare dependents but of "democracy" worldwide. Few, if any, conservatives today speak of rolling back the welfare state. They merely quibble about who is able to run it more efficiently. The conservative movement, then, is about *power*—nothing else—and control of the *apparat*. It is a kind of mutated "me-too" conservatism, a decaffeinated Clintonism. Nowhere is this better illustrated than in the conservative response to the Clintons' national health plan, a federal power grab unequaled since FDR's National Recovery Administration. Rather than opposing the monstrosity philosophically and on principle as "Marxism by the drink" (in P.J. O'Rourke's delicious phrase), the Republicrats in Congress have ginned up their own versions of socialism-lite.

Is there reason for hope? Raimondo thinks there is, though I am less optimistic. He believes that the collapse of communism, the end of the Cold War, and the rise of a "new" Old Right (the so-called paleoconservatives grouped around Pat Buchanan) have combined to throw the larger conservative movement into a period of *angst* and introspection, possibly even renewal. Conservatives must decide what they stand for, as well as against, and that cannot be what the statist, internationalist Democrats approve of. And so Raimondo's book takes on the character of a manifesto, a ringing call to arms for paleoconservatives and libertarians to join in a new populist crusade, not only to take back the conservative movement and restore it to its lost heritage but to return the country to its traditional republican principles. The Buchanan candidacy was, Raimondo believes, the opening volley in the battle. It is past time, he insists, for movement conservatives to rediscover the lost legacy of the Old Right's American nationalism, which was antistatist and anti-interventionist and which proudly reveled in American exceptionalism.

Will the long-suffering middle class rise up against its tormentors, as Raimondo believes? Will a beleaguered people rebel against the crushing weight of statism, redistributive taxation, bureaucratic elitism, and global empire that is slowly crushing it underfoot? Perhaps, but sheep make poor revolutionaries. The genius of the Yankee socialism—or fascism, depending on one's analysis—that has overtaken America is that it has democratized the dole through a monstrous, interlocking network of government handouts and entitlements. The vast majority of Americans, including many in the middle class, now stand at the receiving end of the Great National Nanny's philanthropy. And, as Garet Garrett observed, habits of dependence are much easier to form than to break.

The rift in the conservative movement, the widening gulf between neocons and paleocons, is by now widely recognized. The narrative treatment of that history is not what sets Raimondo's work apart from other *post mortems* of the conservative movement in the aftermath of Bill Clinton's ascension to the presidency (the idea that George Bush should have been taken seriously as the leader of anything like a "conservative party" is patently absurd); the conservative crack-up has been well-chronicled, even as skirmish lines have been drawn and artillery unlimbered. Rather, the strength of his work is to be found in his sympathetic, though scarcely uncritical, portraits of the "forgotten" warriors of the Old Right and his inescapable conclusion that contemporary conservatism, as it is known and practiced in the precincts of power, bears scant resemblance to its progenitor. c



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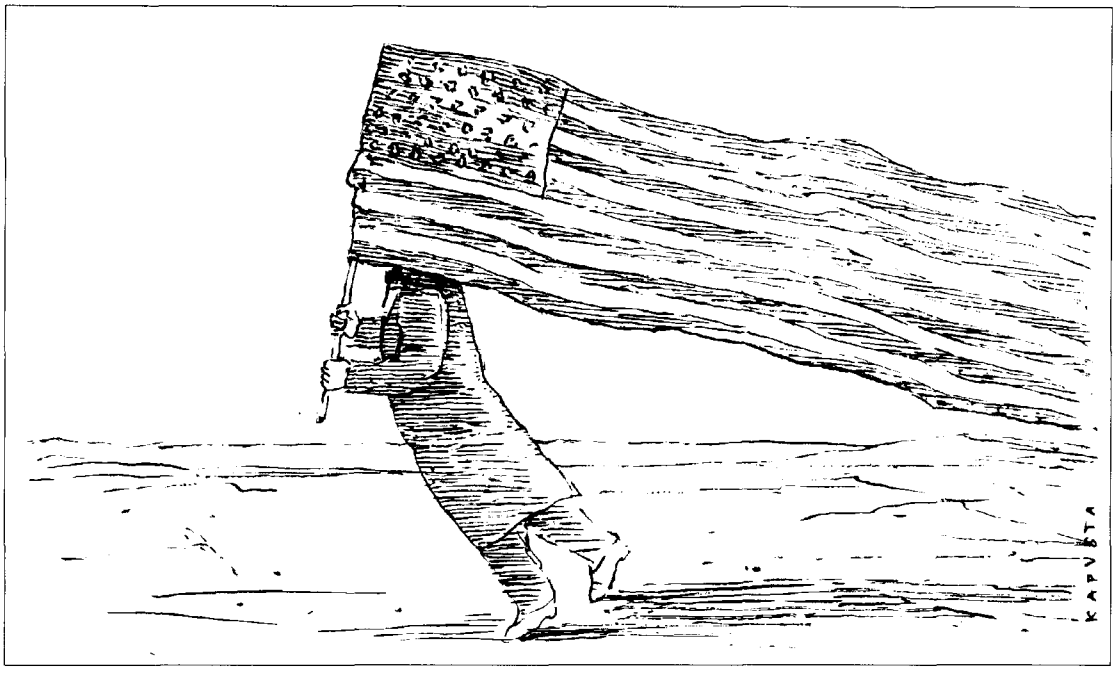
Blaming the Sixties

by Paul Gottfried

"In dirt and darkness hundreds stink content."
—Alexander Pope



The Dream and the Nightmare: The Sixties' Legacy to the Underclass
by Myron Magnet
New York: William Morrow; 320 pp., $23.00

◆

Despite the hype that welcomed this book—gushing praise in the *Wall Street Journal* and *National Review* and a bash hosted by the Kristols for the Bradley Foundation—Myron Magnet's study of American political culture is surprisingly sound. The reasons the neoconservatives showcased this work are obvious: namely, their shared background with the author and his talk about "values," something neocons have made lucrative public careers in pushing. For most of these people, all questions concerning the best possible government have been resolved in favor of a federally centralized welfare state through which they and their progeny can enrich themselves. What remain unresolved from this perspective are exactly what teachings the democratic welfare state should be instilling in the course of managing our lives and incomes. Of course, even this politicized question of "values" no longer really matters, since the managerial welfare state that has overtaken America encourages habits of servility and brooks no obstacles to its control of a captive public. It cannot become the instrument of republican virtue or of individual responsibility without abandoning its identity and, ultimately, its power.

While this demoralizing rule has sometimes been likened to that of Hobbes's "mortal god" Leviathan, Magnet does not make the unfortunate mistake of conflating them. The current American government, he reminds us, has nothing in common with the Hobbesian state. That sovereign mechanism, conceived to maintain public order, did not glorify antisocial and deviant behavior: it was intended primarily to prevent people from devouring each other. Magnet recognizes the ancient and medieval roots of Leviathan, particularly its link to the godly magistrate chastising sinful violence. It was a concept of political authority based on recognition of man's natural depravity that Hobbes integrated into his "science of politics." The trick for Hobbes was to expound the political implications of original sin while appealing to a materialist anthropology dressed in geometric argumentation; this was in fact the fateful compromise from which was born in postmedieval Europe a still ambivalent form of modernism. That political modernity typified by Hobbes, Machiavelli, and, more recently, James Burnham was not purely secularist, but rather a series of "scientific" adaptations of the Christian view of a fallen human nature.

It was the radical Whig pamphleteer and philosophical empiricist John Locke who separated this materialist anthropology from its traditionalist hinges. By declaring that everyone was equally the bearer of a cognitive blank slate at birth, and by linking human conduct to acquisitiveness rather than to violent passion for self-aggrandizement, Locke prepared the way for the reduction of political life to economic transactions. He also expounded social views that ignored the intractability of human evil.

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Despite Locke's occasional defenses of property as a natural right, both the socialist John Rawls and the neoconservative Nathan Tarcov are justified when they refer to him as "our philosopher." As Richard Ashcraft has shown, Locke appealed to English Levelers and to established propertyholders, and he can be and has been read as both a majoritarian democrat and an advocate of acquisitive individualism. In any case, the preference displayed by social democrats of all kinds for Locke over Hobbes may be due to Locke's optimistic, as well as antagonistic, materialism. Lockean man engages in what Leo Strauss called "the joyless pursuit of joy," and this purely economic and remarkably docile being is depicted as already striving after material fortune in Locke's mythical state of nature.

Magnet is intuitively correct when he looks to Hobbes's more qualified modernism for political guidance. He is equally right in finding intimations of such modernism among the Founding Fathers, despite their condemnation of what they thought of as Hobbesian absolutism. The federal government as understood by the Founders exists to curb violence and to ensure limited commercial and military cooperation among the previously feuding states. Political authority in general was believed to be necessary because man is "neither beast nor angel," in the words of James Madison. Men need sufficient government to maintain order, but not enough to destroy their social institutions. Still and all, as Magnet notes, Americans were taught to revere their magistrates, not as the extensions of a utilitarian state but as those who stood between them and chaos. Until recently, Americans regarded policemen, judges, and other public servants with deference. Whatever limits were imposed on their powers, such presumed protectors of our liberties and public order enjoyed the deep respect Hobbes associated with his mortal god.

Magnet is troubled that the American federal government and state administrations, which it controls, have forfeited the veneration due to a properly functioning Leviathan. Note that he does not defend our government, or claim that it should be revered but is not. Magnet holds no brief for what the American government has become. He scolds it for rewarding the antisocial behavior of the underclass, while being increasingly indifferent to the claims of life and property. He ascribes this development to a cultural trend, the abandonment of responsible standards of social behavior by the educated and wealthy. This privileged group, disproportionately represented in government, has corrupted those below by encouraging a susceptible proletariat to practice its vices, and by leading the state to reflect its own sentimental self-indulgence.

My differences with Magnet concern problems of omission, not the core of his argument, which I accept with only a few reservations. Above all, Magnet is correct when he insists on the need for political authority without offering a defense of what presently passes for authority. I applaud his invocation of Hobbes's Leviathan as a symbol of the transitional nature of the American Republic, suspended between Augustinian gloom and the Enlightenment's science of politics. And the yuppie political culture is indeed as unappealing as he suggests, particularly when its projects are governmentally imposed. Magnet, however, exaggerates the degree to which the underclass has taken its vices from above. Use of heroin among the lower classes began to soar in the 20's with the growth of organized crime, and lower-class black and Puerto Rican males, from puberty into their 30's, have a rate of violent crime that is not matched in the more affluent, predominantly white society. While Magnet properly blames the therapeutic state at least in part on irresponsible upper-class behavior, lower-class vice cannot be explained entirely in terms of examples set by hippies and yuppies. Finally, Magnet goes too far in identifying culture as the cause of political and social decay. "It did not all begin in the 60's," is the retort by paleos to neocons lamenting the eruption of the counterculture. The moral developments deplored by Magnet and other neoconservatives are linked indissolubly to political ones. The managerial welfare state was in place by the 30's, and had existed in rudimentary form since the Progressive Era. It was inevitable that, as it continued to grow in alliance with multinational corporations and a social-engineering intelligentsia, this bureaucratic behemoth would weaken traditional moral values and established ways of life.

Federal power has never been value-neutral, and welfare states, as Max Weber pointed out, generally function to the detriment of ancestral community. In America the federal government has simply engulfed state and local governments, obtaining most of the revenues for domestic expenses; controlling the franchise; and applying the Bill of Rights against the states, for whose benefit it was originally enacted. Magnet does not deal adequately with the impact of politics on culture; in this respect he bears some resemblance to postwar traditionalists who seemed to believe that political institutions would take care of themselves once we attended to aesthetic and moral issues. Murray Rothbard got the priorities straight when he said, "No cultural discussion will get us anywhere unless this bureaucratic monster that rules over us is first smothered." Magnet himself makes much of the fact that the political class incorporated much of the counterculture. More to the point, it did so selectively, in order to enhance its power. Thus it took from the New Left the science of victimology and theories of economic collectivization, but not ideas about communal self-government.

One does not have to be a structural determinist to recognize the obvious in this case: the American regime did not arise *ab ovo*, nor is it entirely derivative of changed cultural attitudes. An intrusive government has increasingly meddled in our lives throughout the 20th century and is likely to grow more intrusive yet. Largely unrestricted immigration since the 60's has provided government agencies with new clients and foot soldiers, and these have become the pretext in the midst of cultural confusion for herding us closer to the global village; it is hard to see how a return to self-government and nontherapeutic authority can occur together with the continued influx of Third World proletarians.

Magnet may not be pessimistic enough in his appraisal of American institutions, but he has faced up to our social and political situation with more honesty than have many of his encomiasts. Unlike them, he has no illusions that American society has become more just, or that what ails it can be cured through federal programs in "values." A scholar of English Victorian literature, Magnet has brought to the study of our troubled age both insight and concern. Longtime residency in New York City has been for him a sobering experience. One assumes that Magnet does not have a chauffeur-driven limousine, and that he descends often into the subway.

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The Pit—And the Pendulum

by Clyde Wilson

The Papers of Jefferson Davis, Volume 7: 1861
Edited by Linda Lasswell Crist and Mary Seaton Dix
Baton Rouge and London: Louisiana State University Press;
557 pp., $50.00

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Our Founding Fathers understood that they had inaugurated a republican federal union unique in its balance and distribution of powers. Unlike their descendants, who self-indulgently congratulate themselves on their democracy, the Fathers also understood that the preservation of such a regime was a daunting and demanding task, requiring virtue (in the masculine Roman sense) on the part of the citizenry as well as national good fortune. How to prevent rulers from usurping the rights of the people in the long run—as rulers inevitably tend to do—and, on the other hand, prevent majority rule (in its proper role as the deliberate sense of the people) from devolving into tyranny?

From the beginning, the founding generation identified dangers to the republican federal union under two antagonistic rubrics worked out in the quarrels between the friends of Mr. Jefferson and the friends of General Hamilton. The latter believed the greatest danger to be "disunion," that without a vigorous central power, self-government would perish from its own anarchic tendencies. The Jeffersonian party felt that liberty could be destroyed just as surely by another danger, "consolidation": the absorption of the sovereignty of the inhabitants of the various states by any or all branches of a "general government" intent on grasping powers beyond its legitimate and limited few.

Jefferson clearly regarded disunion as the lesser evil. Disunion would disperse but not necessarily subvert government of the people, especially since no one generation could irrevocably bind posterity. It mattered little if the Union broke into independent states or into two or more confederacies: self-government would survive and thrive. But to invest the central government with the powers and divinity that had once been attributed to monarchs (i.e., "consolidation") would certainly destroy self-government.

No people has ever forgotten, misunderstood, and misrepresented their history as have Americans, who recently celebrated the bicentennial of their Constitution without even mentioning the ideas of republicanism and federalism, though these were once considered to be the essential and unique features of the American regime. This is, to make a long story short, because in the middle of the 19th century the ideal of—and the instinct for—republican liberty was replaced by the doctrine of the state as a divine instrument of progress, both economic and moral. Each succeeding generation has enhanced the progress of consolidation through the pursuit of bestowed and managed prosperity and of the most socially destructive goal, egalitarianism. Impatient of constitutional principles that present obstacles to this pursuit, the American regime calls itself a "democracy" because it reflects "majority rule." Very seldom, though, does majority rule express the deliberate sense of the people. More often than not it is a fluctuating coalition of self-interest groups ("factions" to the Founders) or an accidental "majority" like the 43 percent of the half of eligible citizens who voted that elected Clinton and the 39 percent that elected Lincoln.

One of the few certain laws one learns from the study of history is this: the pendulum always swings back, in some fashion or other. Throughout the civilized world people are, after more than a century of the seemingly inevitable progress of "consolidation," seeking once more to constitute their own self-governing communities and to take back their fate from the swollen, greedy, incompetent, and irresponsible bureaucracies that govern them. So it may be time for a fresh look at the great conflict that lies at the center of our history, the last great anti-consolidationist rising that is still, in terms of the quantities of blood shed and the revolutionary objectives consummated, the largest event in our life as a people. To crush self-government in the Southern states required the life of every tenth northern, and every fourth Southern, white man.

For the current generation it is difficult, in fact nearly impossible, to imagine a conflict over principle. The Civil War, it assumes, could not have been about *principle*; it must have been about *conditions*: i.e., the status of the African-American (a misreading reenforced by the tendency to equate victory and virtue, even retrospectively). Yet while the war certainly crushed disunion, the status of the African-American remains even today a largely unsolved problem in the north as well as in the South. It is a neat historical serendipity that the fine documentary edition of the papers of President Jefferson Davis has just reached the secessionary year of 1861. The very skilled and knowledgeable editors have included Davis's most important state papers, a judicious selection out of an overwhelming corpus of documents that illuminate the creation of the Confederate government in the midst of life-and-death struggle.

The glamour of the Confederate military leaders is fixed in the understanding of the world; as long as men continue to admire courage, chivalry, dash, and honor, only the hopelessly churlish can fail to be moved. The civil leaders of the South have fared much less well. Yet Davis is one of the most interesting men in American history, a tragic hero of epic dimensions. If the moguls of Hollywood docudrama had any taste and any sense of history they could find in Davis a story worthy of the pen of Shakespeare. Jefferson Davis and Varina, his wife, had one of the truly great romances of American history. I exaggerate not in the least: she was beautiful, passionate, highly intelligent, courageous, and loyal almost beyond crediting—truly one of the handful of the most remarkable and admirable women in all of American history.

Lincoln was lucky to leave the scene when he did, a martyr without the stain that Reconstruction would inevitably have brought to his reputation. Davis, by comparison, was traduced by a government that kept him shackled in prison for two years, while denying him the trial he craved. He could not be brought

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to trial because, of course, any open and fair judicial proceeding would have established beyond any doubt that secession by state government from the Union is not treason. Who knows but that we might have here a rediscovered hero of the future, when the impatience of the people with the ever-encroaching state has reached its limit. In the meantime, if you wish to begin to understand the story of our country, I recommend that you read the letter Jeff Davis wrote on January 20, 1861, to his northern friend Franklin Pierce, as well as his farewell speech to the Senate the following day as he withdrew to join his seceding state: "We recur to the principles upon which our government was founded. We but tread in the path of our fathers when we proclaim our independence." Or his inaugural address on February 18 of the same critical year: "Our present condition . . . illustrates the American idea that governments rest upon the consent of the governed. . . . We have changed the constituent parts, but not the system of our government. The Constitution formed by our fathers is that of these Confederate States."

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Pluggers

by R.S. Gwynn

Dark Horses: New Poems
by X.J. Kennedy
Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press;
72 pp., $10.95

C
by Fred Chappell
Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press;
64 pp., $15.95

◆

There is a cartoon that I see from time to time called "Pluggers," a one-panel affair offering variations on a single theme: "You're a plugger if. . . ." One can qualify as a plugger by virtue of having stacked a woodpile taller than his house; loaded a freezer full of individual servings of delicious entrées; arranged all bills, canceled checks, and receipts in the exact order of Form 1040; and so on. It's a variation on the tortoise and hare ethos: *slow and steady wins the race*. The repeated moral of "Pluggers" takes a clear slap at the procrastinator, the prodigy, the flash in the pan, and the one-hit wonder and serves as an anodyne to the persistent plodder, the commission-only man, and all those faced with seemingly endless tasks who have learned that mountains get reduced to molehills one pebble at a time.

Are most poets pluggers? Alas, no. Where are the Younger Poets of yesteryear? Gone for tenure, every one. In most cases it seems that the work ethic vanishes almost as quickly as inspiration, and most mid- and late-career collections seem content merely to reiterate old themes, in language and forms whose laxity reflects the sedentariness and safety of professional sinecures: the books keep coming, but they seem more attuned to the tastes of deans and promotion committees than to those of discriminating readers. For the poet who has published a volume of selected or collected poems and garnered a major prize or two, what incentive remains to equal or surpass one's early standards? *Pride* would seem the obvious answer, but that seems a commodity in increasingly short supply these days. In such a climate, we should be doubly grateful for collections like these by X.J. Kennedy and Fred Chappell.

X.J. Kennedy's *Cross Ties: Selected Poems* won the *Los Angeles Times* award for best book of poetry in 1985. Kennedy, who has spread his career over a hugely successful set of literature textbooks and other editorial chores, has never been a prolific poet, and I (like many others, I suspect) was pleased to see *Dark Horses*, a substantial collection of new poems. Kennedy's accustomed stance—Irish-American Everyman, skeptical and cagey—and his established skill as a craftsman in whose work plainspoken idiom and the demands of rhyme and meter never seem at odds are both much in evidence here. He ranges from a choice sequence of epitaphs (*Writer*: "I who once dealt in words and set great store / On words have, in a word or two, no more") to longer pieces like "Black Velvet Art," which begins with this savory slice of American pie:

> On a corner in rainriddled
> Lewiston blooms a stand
> Of giant paintings, guaranteed
> made by hand:
> Elvis with hairdo laced with bright
> gold nimbus,
> Jesus with heart aflame, arms wide
> to bless
> Your pickup truck, a leopard
> crouched to leap
> Upon a bathing beauty sound
> asleep,
> And all resplendent on a
> jet-deep back-
> Ground of profoundly interstellar
> black,
> Blacker than nearby space. . . .

Kennedy is perhaps best known as a social satirist whose barbs rarely wound, flung as they are with immense good will and humor. One poem in *Dark Horses* purports to be spoken by the answering machine at Emily Dickinson's home (did the poet consider the additional irony that Ms. Dickinson was *never out*?); another, "On Being Accused of Wit," begins, "No, I am witless." Nevertheless, as the book's title perhaps implies, here Kennedy's vision has become more grimly urban and has taken on Hogarthian shadings: a beaten rat tossed from a jail window occasions an epiphany ("that urge to kill / And throw out and clean house") in a cancer-ridden woman on her way to receive radiation therapy; an "Empty House Singing to Itself" is not likely to deter even "the dimmest-brained housebreaker"; we impotently watch "On the Square" as a "dealer in crack unjacknifes from a bench, / Twitches numb muscles, makes stiff fingers clench, / A switchblade gleam / In his right hand, to sway / Over a huge-eyed boy. . . ." Even the mortgaged bastions of suburbia provide only "a safer place to die / Where privacies are clung to like beliefs / And separate houses wall in separate griefs." But all is not downside. One of Kennedy's more upbeat passages could serve as the credo of all true pluggers:

> Blind chance not wit entices
> words to stay
> And recognizing luck is artifice
> That comes unlearned. The rest
> is taking pride
> In daily labor. This and only this.
> On keyboards sweat alone makes
> fingers glide.

In the same year that Kennedy was

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honored for his selected poems Fred Chappell won the Bollingen Prize, primarily on the strength of *Midquest*, an epic-length sequence of poems taking as their single point of departure the Dantaesque overtones of the poet's 35th birthday. Because readers familiar with Chappell's work will think of him, first, as the foremost (and perhaps funniest) literary spokesman for Appalachia and, second, as a poet-novelist who is most at home in the narrative genre, they may be surprised by C, a collection of a hundred numbered poems whose length rarely exceeds a score of lines. Well, as the poet (here, *somewhat* after Martial) saith, "Small is Beautiful":

You've told me, Gaurus, I have
little art
Because I make my teasing poems
short.
But then am I to think your
genius soars
Because you write twelve tomes of
Priam's wars?
To carve a statuette is my hard
duty.
You heap a bloat colossus of Silly
Putty.

As Chappell duly notes, epigrams are notoriously hit-or-miss propositions, but some may "Deliver intelligence / With such a sudden blaze / The shine can make us wince." The misses are sometimes a bit musty: "*LXVI Definition*: The only animal that dares to play the bagpipes. *LXVII Corollary*: Or wants to." The hits are tart and true: "LXXIX Upon an Amorous Old Couple / This coltish April weather / Has caused them to aspire / To rub dry sticks together / In hopes that they'll catch fire."

My personal favorite follows a Martial imitation cataloguing "the things that make life blest." This one tells "what things make life a bore":

Sappy girls who kiss and tell;
Televangelists' threats of hell;
Whining chain saws, mating cats;
Republicans, and Democrats;
Expertly tearful on their knees,
Plushlined senators copping pleas,
Swearing by the Rock of Ages
That they did not molest their
pages;
Insurance forms and tax reports;
Flabby jokes and lame retorts;
Do-gooders, jocks, and feminists;
Poems that are merely lists.

We might be tempted to add lazy book reviewers who are content merely to string together favorite lines and stanzas, but in a case like this the technique seems justified. Chappell's "Apology," quoted here in full, defines the appeal of C much better than I or any critic can:

If any line I've scribbled here
Has caused a politician shame
Or brought a quack a troubled
night
Or given a critic a twinge of fear
Or made a poet's flame appear
Transitory as a candleflame,
Why then, I gladly sign my name:
Maybe I did something right.

This plugger's incomparable work was awarded the 1993 T.S. Eliot Award.

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Short Constructions

by William P. Baldwin

Thief of Lives
by Kit Reed
Columbia: University of Missouri Press;
179 pp., $19.95

The Graywolf Annual Nine: Stories From the New Europe
Edited by Scott Walker
Saint Paul: Graywolf Press;
224 pp., $11.00

◆

You don't have to read far into the story collection *Thief of Lives* before John Cheever's name comes to mind, but after so many years of writing, Kit Reed must be used to that comparison. By now she should be replying: "Yes, but I write as well as that man did and occasionally even better. And besides, he's dead and I'm alive." Certainly she has established as good a claim as any to the territory of life. Hers is first-rate storytelling, and her protagonists are admirably tenacious. Middle and upper-middle class, for the most part, they are all attempting to struggle through life (usually middle age and beyond) while maintaining some shred of dignity.

Husbands and wives, parents and children, odd assortments of in-laws and friends: these relationships are her subject matter. Adults are looking back. Children are looking forward. Or vice versa. Everyone is blaming everyone else for everything, and yet finally they all must take responsibility for their own lives. Most of the stories are linked by these relationships and by an accompanying vision of physical entrapment. Whether a submarine, bomb shelter, snow cave, or vacation home, the central image is, in fact, that of the tomb. Death has freed Lazarus of life's responsibilities, and then, through the unsolicited assistance of Jesus, he is raised up and sent out to resume the struggle. Only now he has more than a hint of mortality and, apparently, few expectations of an afterlife.

Though the stories contain references to God and love, I wouldn't classify them as "Christian." The Bible is more a source of literary allusions than of comfort. And though many of the characters are obviously suffering from easily diagnosed abandonment or a variety of similar disorders, psychiatry gets even shorter shrift than religion. Nor do the characters communicate in any fundamental, rational, outspoken way. They are cautious to a fault and timid beyond measure—laughably so. Sadly so. They tap out messages to each other in soundless, emotional codes, exchange platitudes, or do without. But in the end most still manage to triumph in some outwardly quiet way. They summon the vigor to begin again, or, as the narrator of the title story more eloquently puts it, "as Lazarus with tables turned, sit down at their own banquet and [throw] heavily frosted chunks of cake: take that you guys, whoever. And that."

Having said what I liked about 13 of the stories, I will simply mention that "Winter," a tale of two spinsters eating their house guest, does not work. And even more irritating for me was "Academic Novel," a loose itinerary of faculty couplings and uncouplings, which, we are told, is a disguised form of love. Maybe. The tale is funny enough, but it tended to enforce my already healthy prejudices and undercut the solid stories that surround it.

* * *

The concept of a fractured Europe offering a variety of cultures (and literatures) is not totally new to me. Fifteen years ago my then-neighbor, the editor of this journal, expounded on this subject

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as we drank our Saturday morning coffee. Prophetic on his part, but such a warning hardly qualifies me to pass judgment on Graywolf's *Stories From the New Europe*. Nevertheless, I agree with editor Scott Walker's assessment of "a mass market and communications system that threatens to overwhelm localized customs and concerns." And I sadly suspect that this threat is far greater to regional literature than that offered by any totalitarian government.

The collection contains 16 stories drawn from the following countries or ethnic divisions: Serbia, Croatia, Czechoslovakia, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Ireland, Lebanon, Iceland, Basque, and Catalonia. I think it safe to assume they represent some of the best writing by the best writers these cultures have to offer. Foreigners make good storytellers. That is a given.

It should not be surprising that the stories coming out of Eastern Europe tend to emphasize "the citizen's relationship to authority." Still, I was surprised by this and by the general drabness of life: the heroic act most often described was the simple accomplishment of getting through another day. The subject of a repressed citizenry is also a theme of the Basque and Catalonian writers, but their stories are set apart by a refreshing earthiness. Other tensions considered by most of the writers include the conflict of rural and urban and between provinces and world. And it should be noted that religion often matters as much as politics.

Serbian Danilo Kis's "Garden, Ashes" reduces the Bible to ten merry pages—"the quintessence of all miracles, all myths and legends, great deeds and terrors, horses, armies and swords, trumpets, drums, howls." Then it applies its lesson of guilt to the author's first childhood romance and the crazed confirmation service that followed.

Czechoslovakian Ivan Klíma's "Monday Morning: A Black Market Tale" relates the adventures of a writer under police surveillance attempting to get medical attention for the suicidal son of his sadistic neighbor, a black marketeer. All this is not nearly so grim as it sounds, for Klíma manages to portray the state of his country with humor (black-hearted though it may be) and end on a note of life-affirming pathos.

Latvian Regína Ezera's "Man Needs Dog" shows us an old man with four puppies to sell. Again we are given a thumbnail sketch of an entire society: one where people have forgotten how to barter. A young musician, three giggling girls, an alcoholic with plenty of money, and a young boy with hardly any—each carries off a puppy, and the old man returns home to the companionship of the puppies' mother. The writing here is thickly textured, dense, and powerful. The moral: "Man must be responsible for his dog, and this is a truth people ought to know."

Basque Angel Lertxundi's "This Cold Earth is not Santo Domingo" begins: "By the time they buried me, the tired wrinkles on their faces, their imperceptible, deliberately shed tears, and their soft fleeting sighs had disappeared." The dead woman describes how she took a lover to revenge herself on her philandering husband, and how her husband then allowed her to die from an untreated illness.

Catalonian Mericè Rodoreda's "The Salamander" also deals with adultery, but it is told in the manner of a folktale. Burned as a witch, the accused woman melts into the shape of a salamander and escapes. Then, returning to her lover's house, she is discovered beneath the bed by his wife. Persecuted again, the salamander-narrator seeks refuge in a pond "among the thirsty grass roots and willow roots that had drunk there since the beginning of time." This is an amazing piece, one that comes with the authority that can only be instilled by a truly "timeless" oral tradition.

Lebanese Hanan Al Shaykh's "The Women's Swimming Pool" tells of a young Muslim girl's attempts to travel from the countryside into Lebanon for a first glimpse of the ocean and a bath in the women's swimming pool. For her companion, she has her tradition-bound grandmother; her burden is the barely stated fact that the other members of her family are dead. A wall of anxiety confronts her, but beyond she glimpses the sea shining "as though pieces of silver paper were resting on it." Of these Graywolf stories, this one is my favorite. The world described here is tactile, rich to all the senses. You can feel the heat and the rough grit of the stones. And you can feel the protagonist's terrible frustration. Here is a world of immense sorrow reduced to a handful of pages.

William P. Baldwin is the author of The Hard to Catch Mercy, *a novel recently published by Algonquin Press.*

He Loved New York

by James P. Degnan

Up in the Old Hotel: And Other Stories
by Joseph Mitchell
New York: Pantheon; 718 pp., $27.50

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Long regarded by critics, fans, and various of his colleagues at the *New Yorker* as America's finest literary journalist, 85-year-old Joseph Mitchell had not, until recently, published a word since 1965, and people wondered what he was doing in his small cubicle at the *New Yorker*'s offices, where he has regularly appeared for over half a century. The answer, in part, is that Mitchell was collecting and editing old work and writing new work for his latest book *Up in the Old Hotel*, a 718-page collection of his best writing that includes four long out-of-print books: *McSorley's Wonderful Saloon*, *Old Mr. Flood*, *The Bottom of the Harbor*, and *Joe Gould's Secret*.

Born and raised in the small town of Fairmont, North Carolina, Mitchell attended the University of North Carolina for four years but did not graduate. In 1929 (at age 21) he arrived in New York seeking a job in journalism. He found work at several newspapers—first at the New York *World* and in later years at the *Herald Tribune* and the *World Telegram*—as a night-beat reporter, a job that inspired in him a lifelong fascination for the raffish side of urban life. During his years as a newspaper reporter (from 1929 to 1938, the year he joined the staff of the *New Yorker*), Mitchell was happiest interviewing and writing about "unusual" characters—preachers and minor league gangsters, "obsessives, imposters, fanatics, and lost souls."

He wrote about the black gangster Gilligan Holton, owner of Harlem nightspots with names like Busted and the Broken Leg. He wrote about street preachers like the Reverend James Jefferson Davis Hall, who carried a *Where Will You Spend Eternity?* sign up and down the sidewalks of the theater district. He wrote about Miss Mazie Gordon, owner of the Venice, a movie theater in the Bowery. A tough-talking,

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chain-smoking, peroxide blonde secular saint, Mazie sold tickets from 9:30 A.M. until 11 P.M. seven days a week and spent the last three hours of her day—from 11 P.M. to 2 A.M.—touring the Bowery, handing out money to the down and out, getting drunks to flophouses on cold nights, and calling ambulances for the injured. (Mitchell, always a meticulous researcher, found that Mazie had called more ambulances than any private citizen in New York.) He wrote about New York saloons like McSorley's and Dick's Bar and Grill—and about their owners. Before locking up for the night, John McSorley, well into his 80's, would grill himself a three-pound sirloin steak and consume hollowed-out loaves of French bread stuffed with whole onions. He wrote about Captain Charley's Museum for Intelligent People. He wrote about a man who sold "racing cockroaches to society people." He wrote about Billy Sunday, about Tammany Hall politicians, about lady boxers; about fishermen, tugboat captains, and butchers; about urban gypsies, bearded ladies, fan dancers, pickpockets, Mohawk Indians, and child geniuses.

But it was not until Mitchell became a staff writer for the *New Yorker* that he was able to produce the work, the long "fact pieces" and portraits, that established his reputation as reporter and artist par excellence—as, to quote critic Stanley Edgar Hyman, "the paragon of reporters." The *New Yorker* freed Mitchell from the pressures of the daily newspaper deadline, and even though he continued to write about many of the same people and places he had described as a newspaper reporter, as a *New Yorker* writer he had the time and freedom to develop these people and places in much greater depth and detail, so that what were originally sketches became richly detailed, enduring portraits.

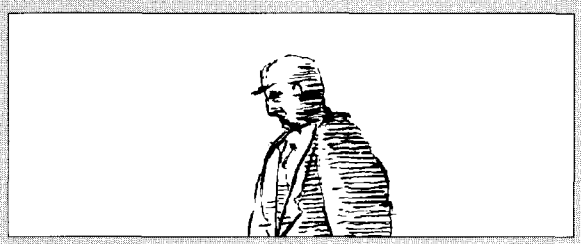
Like "Mazie," Mitchell's "The Old House at Home"—the first of the 27 pieces that make up his book *McSorley's Wonderful Saloon*—was originally a newspaper sketch, and as such it is a highly entertaining, vivid description of a venerable New York institution founded in 1854 and largely unchanged in the 1940's, when Mitchell started writing about it. In the early 1940's, as in 1854, the floors of McSorley's are sawdust-covered. A potbellied stove provides warmth. There is no cash register—change is made from a wooden box. Only ale is served—no whiskey, much less wine or liqueurs. There is a free lunch consisting of crackers, sliced onions, and hunks of cheddar cheese. Women are banned (though a woman owned the place in the 1940's). Four of five customers are Irish workingmen (brick layers, dock workers, truck drivers) or ancient Irish retirees drinking up their pension checks. John McSorley's 1854 sign—"Be Good or Be Gone"—is still prominently displayed.

Mitchell's New York, of course, is long gone. He writes, to use John Cheever's description, of a time when "the city of New York was still filled with a river of light, when you heard the Benny Goodman quartets from a radio in the corner stationery store, and when almost everybody wore a hat." The New York of the 30's, 40's, and early 50's was a gentler, kinder, incomparably safer city, wherein at 2:00 in the morning one could walk unafraid in tough neighborhoods—"in the slums," as E.B. White wrote in his classic essay "Here Is New York," amidst "poverty and bad housing . . . in the reassuring safety of family life." Mitchell's New York is really the New York of "usual" people, of working- and middle-class people, of family people, of people living by traditional values, of decent people who, though they may be creatures of immoderation, self-declared atheists cynical and comically irreverent about traditional values, lead essentially religious lives in the knowledge, conscious or unconscious, that the sanity, stability, and safety of their world depends on those values.

Mitchell quit writing in the early 60's because, he says, "the city changed on me." One need not be highly imaginative to know what he means.

James P. Degnan is a professor of English at Santa Clara State University.

LIBERAL ARTS



PSEUDOVICTIMITIS BARBATULA

In the latest development in the Domino's Pizza "beard ban" case, a federal appeals court in St. Louis ruled last October that the company must waive its interdict for black employees who have a common and sometimes painful skin ailment, pseudofollicilitis barbae (PFB).

According to the *New York Times* last November, the events that led to this ruling began ten years ago, when Langston J. Bradley of Omaha, Nebraska, who is black, got a part-time job as a delivery driver for the pizza-maker. Mr. Bradley had worked at Domino's for a few weeks when he was told that he must shave the beard he had just started to grow or he would lose his job; he then filed suit on the grounds that the company's rule discriminated against black men and thus violated federal civil rights law. He was joined in the suit by the federal Equal Employment Opportunity Commission.

While a federal district judge decided last year that Domino's had legitimate business reasons for banning beards (and that, in any case, Mr. Bradley's skin condition was not so severe that he needed to avoid shaving), a three-judge panel of the United States Court of Appeals for the Eighth Circuit unanimously overturned the decision, saying that the company must relax its rule for the "protected class who suffer from PFB."

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Letter From Zagreb

by Thomas Fleming

Out of the Rubble, A Christian State?

◆

As the Air Croatia plane began its descent into Zagreb, it came to me that I had no idea where I was going. The Chesterton Society conference was to be held downtown at Europski Dom, but the participants were being put up at a Jesuit seminary. In a city of nearly a million, the Jesuits would probably have more than one address. As I was to learn in the coming days, greater Zagreb is riddled with Jesuit seminaries and schools, to say nothing of other religious houses and foundations. Indeed, the city sprung up around the cathedral, and the oldest part—the "Kaptol"—takes its name from the chapter of canons.

Any traveler is understandably anxious about landing in a strange country in the midst of war and political change, especially if his command of the language barely covers ordering a meal. Try as I might, I could not recall even the word for information (*obvashtenje*), although, as it turns out, the Great I is a universal symbol. My fears were exacerbated by the knowledge that, war or no war, communism or ex-communism, nothing ever seems to get done in the Balkans, except after a long and bitter sequence of missed appointments and broken promises that give victory the taste of ashes.

What part of this mentality is the ancient legacy of the Balkans and what part the residue of communism, I am not prepared to say. Tom Sunic, who now handles foreign press relations for the ministry of foreign affairs, came to the conference and described the mind of *Homo yugoslaviensis* as a compound of sloth and dependency that justified itself as a technique of subversion against the state, and the evidence for his thesis is everywhere in Zagreb.

If it had been up to *Homo yugoslaviensis*, I might still be in the airport trying to buy a map. Fortunately, I was met by a man apparently untouched by years of communist rule. Marijo Zhivkovitch, director of Obiteljski Centar (a program to help families), picked me up in his van on the way to his warehouse, where a truck was waiting to take old clothes to distribution points. Marijo is a Catholic activist and a personification, albeit a gentle one, of the Church militant. Strat Caldecott, the conference's main organizer, calls Marijo a saint, and rather than blushing like an embarrassed Anglo-Saxon, Marijo shrugs his shoulders and asks, "Man who keeps Commandments and does God's work, what is he but saint? All good Christians are saints."

In the days to come, I came to look upon Marijo as part saint and part Saint Bernard, especially when I would see his huge frame striding across the snow to rescue us from one minor disaster after another. Instead of a keg of brandy, Marijo has a van usually stuffed with anti-abortion tracts, pro-family pamphlets, rosaries recently blessed by the Pope, foodstuffs, and boxes of clothing.

It is not just the people of Bosnia who need clothing. Although food and rent are comparatively cheap in Zagreb, clothes and furniture are valued on a Western scale. Unfortunately, a good Zagreb salary is $200 per month, and a teacher is unable to afford the price of the suit he is required to wear. For all the moral erosion effected by communism, respectable Croats are unwilling to line up to receive clothing. Rather than let them shiver and be damned, Marijo's "collaborators" take clothes directly to the needy.

His chief accomplices in this business are Neda and Mato Mandir, who were kind enough to put me up my last night in Zagreb. Their apartment is stuffed with secondhand clothing, much of it from Poland. (What is Vergil's line about people that have known suffering being more inclined to charity? *Non ignara mali, miseris succurrere disco.*) Husband and wife both work, and when they are not taking care of their five children, they are packing and distributing clothes. Their eldest daughter, who speaks excellent English, shows me a suit destined for a gymnasium teacher too proud to pick it up. They will take it to him tomorrow.

Marijo and his friends do not speak of welfare or social assistance. Instead, when they provide food and clothing to a family with children—their usual target—they enclose "beautiful letter explaining we do this to honor you as parents who have taken on the noble task of raising many children." In the days to come, as the members of the conference debate the merits of the free market versus some form of Christian socialism, I have cause to think repeatedly of Marijo and of the difference between charity given out of love, both to man and God, and the political schemes that use welfare as a bribe to win support for a regime.

Why pick Zagreb, of all places, as the site of a conference on economics and ethics? Little enough of either, some might be tempted to say. Actually, the place and time are perfect. Whatever one thinks of the breakup of Yugoslavia (I'm all for it, but then I'm all for breaking up every repressive imperial state), the successor republics are in a position to rediscover their national identities and to create political institutions that reflect their national character rather than an imposed ideology, whether communist or capitalist.

It is generally said that Serbs and Croats are one people, united in language and blood and divided only in religion. To me, however, they seem as different as the Germans and the French. Historically, Croatia is a Catholic country as much as Poland or Ireland. As a province of Austria-Hungary, Croatia developed along radically different lines than those imposed on Turkish-dominated Serbia. The Turks were a harsh and alien set of masters, and the best of the Serbs developed a tradition of armed rebellion and national assertion. The Croats, on the other hand, shared the religion of the Austrians and Hungarians, and however much the latter succeeded in bullying Croatia for nearly half a millennium, the result was a prosperous and civilized people, outwardly almost as Germanic as the Czechs.

I attend a dinner party given by the Paneuropean Union. It is a very civilized gathering, but what I am really looking forward to is the traditional music I am told we shall be hearing. I walk

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into the little auditorium, clutching my glass of *lozovacha* (most of the Croats are sipping champagne), expecting peasant costumes and twanging folk music, only to see a well-dressed pair of musicians perform a fine recital of 19th-century German music. Brahms is, for many Croats, their musical tradition. Small wonder that Paul Gottfried and other civilized conservatives (they do exist) find it easy to take the Croatian side.

The contrast with the Serbs is dwelt upon at great length in nearly all my conversations with Croatian intellectuals. Speaking of Yugoslavia as a doomed experiment, one lady tells me, "You can't expect a humane and civilized people to be happily married to a bunch of wild men who had just come down from the hills." The Serbs, I am told, are a people without music or literature. "They are so proud of old Vuk [Vuk Karadjitch, the linguist and ballad-collector who standardized the literary language of both Serbs *and* Croats], because he taught them to write." I make the mistake of saying that a Serbian monastery was printing books on a secret press within 50 years of Gutenberg's invention. It was as if I had told a black Muslim that whites were capable of kindness.

I have been hearing these mutual recriminations for years. The Croats are wiley traitors whose greatest pleasure lies in their periodic genocides against the Serbs; on the other hand, the Serbs are a savage and treacherous race bent on exterminating the Croats, because they envy Croatian superiority. I once had a long conversation with a Croat about Dante, and just as I was thinking what a relief not to talk about the Serbs, he quoted from Dante's list of wicked rulers (in *Paradiso* XIX): "*E quel di Rascia, che male ha visto il conio di Vinegia.*" "Do you know who those counterfeiters were?" It is the Serbs, known for their dishonesty even in Dante's time.

There is some truth in both sets of insults. Serbs inevitably strike urbane central Europeans as uncouth, for the very reason that they remain a folkish people. At his worst, the Serb is a strutting bully, as arrogant as he is merciless. (At his best, he is exuberant and generous.) The Croat, on the other hand, is much more polite—if not always so friendly—and life in Zagreb seems unimaginably lovely compared to Belgrade. At his worst, however, the Croat is more slippery than even the official Serbs in Belgrade. If the Serbs are Machiavelli's lions, then the Croats would surely be good candidates for foxes. Each nation, including ours, I conclude, finds its own way to hell.

The Croats are not all intellectuals and string-players. The seminary—Fratrovac—is located on a high hill outside the city, and in the neighborhood there are still little farms with small plots. There is also the unmistakable odor of penned hogs. If the brick houses were covered with white stucco, I might think I was in Serbia. Peasants apparently constitute a majority in Croatia, where the Peasants Party still has a following. Drinking coffee one afternoon in Europe House, I am introduced to a political intellectual, who hands me a newspaper. It is only later that I realize that *Glasnik Hrvatske Seljachke Stranke* means messenger of the Croatian Peasant Party (HSS). Inside there is a 1936 essay by Stjepan Raditch on the harmony of village life. The little I can make out reminds me of Andrew Lytle and Frank Owsley.

The next day I spot the man with the newspaper, and he turns out to be advisor to Drago Stipac, the head of the HSS. The party has not changed its emphasis, he tells me, since the days of Stjepan and Ante Raditch. The HSS is a traditional peasant movement, opposed to all attempts at centralization, democratic or socialist, and their philosophy is rooted in Tolstoy's principle of non-violence, although they do make an exception for self-defense. Croatia, he says, is in crisis, and he fears the rise of militarism. Only the HSS, he says, is a true Croatian party that can unify the country and save it from the excesses of communism and capitalism.

Historically, the Croatian Peasant Party was among the most interesting political movements in the Balkans. Its heroes, the Raditch brothers, may have been ideologically inconsistent—much like American populists in this regard—but no one doubted either their commitment or their power. The murder of Stjepan Raditch in the Yugoslav parliament is an act of far greater significance locally than, say, the murder of JFK is to us, and the Croats blame it on a Serbian plot, even though Raditch was a personal friend of the king, who regarded him as essential to his own power. The Montenegrin who shot him said it was to avenge an insult, and anyone who knows Montenegrins will find this explanation easy enough to believe, but Raditch's death profited ultra-nationalists in both Croatia and Serbia.

Although the party is not explicitly Catholic, the social and economic views of the HSS are rooted, I am told, in *Rerum novarum*, which this intellectual interprets to mean adherence to the free market subject to Christian doctrine. This conversation confirms my perception that the strongest element in Croatian life is still the Church, persecuted but never co-opted by the communists. (One wishes the same could be said of the official Serbian and Russian Orthodox establishments.) Europe House, where our group is meeting, stands only a block or two around the main square from the cathedral, and our deliberations never stray very far from the Church's great encyclicals on political economy.

In recent years, Eastern Europe has been overrun by free-market conservatives promising to undo the effects of communism in a decade. The hopes they raised have largely gone unrealized, and communist electoral victories in Poland and Lithuania might be interpreted as votes of no confidence in Milton Friedman. But what if the free-marketers were wildly successful in transforming Vilnius and Zagreb into Santa Barbara? California is a land of gentle (usually) savages, whose skills are in the service of consumerism. Life in these United States has all the vulgarity and hedonism of Petronius's Trimalchio—without any of the exuberance. I had somehow hoped that all the taxes we lavished on the Cold War would mean, in the end, something better than David Letterman.

European Catholics strike me as obsessed with Michael Novak, an amiable enough journalist whom it is difficult for an American to view with alarm, but Catholics on both sides of the torn curtain are either enthralled or—more often—terrified by the efforts of Novak and his colleagues to identify the Christian social message with democratic capitalism. (*Communione e Liberazione* writers describe Messers. Novak, Weigel, and Neuhaus as the Neoconservative Trinity.) I do my best to explain that there is nothing particularly new in what they have to say—it is John Dewey grafted onto John Courtney Murray—and none of them writes well enough to attract a mass following. Besides, the leftist excesses of the young Maritainista Novak are excellent weapons to use against the state-capitalist excesses of

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the older Deweyite Novak. If a Church that weathered Pelagius, Arius, and the Babylonian Captivity cannot survive neoconservatism, then the spirit has fled. Fight them on the issues, if you like, but do not confuse them with demons or angelic doctors.

The conference shapes up as a dialogue between those who insist upon the corporate nature of human society and individualists who can look at a family and see only competing interests. Russell Sparkes, a retired investment banker from London, delivered a strong defense of medieval guilds, only to receive the hackneyed counter-argument that everything the guilds used to do is now being done by chambers of commerce, the Better Business Bureau, and insurance companies.

I am probably more of an anarcho-capitalist than most of the free-marketers I have met. A free market is generally the most efficient—and the fairest—mechanism for distributing goods and services. But there is more to human social life than markets. In ancient Athens, the *agora* was a place of commerce and conversation, but one cannot appreciate Athenian life without climbing the hill up to the Acropolis, where the temple of Athena embodied the highest aspirations of the Athenian people. To speak of market value in connection with religion, family, art, or literature is to talk on the level of vulgar utilitarians, whose pretensions were exploded long ago by serious philosophers. That Christians, and Catholic Christians to boot, should use so degenerate a language is one more sign of the evil times in which we live. Before such despots as Henry VIII and Louis XIV consolidated the modern state, the task of government was limited to providing justice to those who asked for it loudly enough and to defending the nation from foreign aggressors and from domestic subversion. The poor, except for periods of emergency, were not the object of royal philanthropy. That task was reserved for the Church, whose monasteries and hospitals offered care and sustenance to the sick and the destitute as well as to weary travelers. For regular poor relief, medieval societies relied upon the local parish.

As soon as modern rulers were able to usurp the property and social functions of the Church, the state was in a position to make itself supreme. A Christian social order, on the other hand, rests upon two powers, the twin thrones of empire and church. If the church rules, the results are dreadful—i.e., the Puritan theocracy or the Renaissance papal states, but when the state reigns supreme and deals out the national wealth to anyone who will support government, the result is what we see around us every day: high taxes, a devouring swarm of place-seeking bureaucrats, a servile and degraded population that looks to government with greater awe and expectation than Diocletian's subjects.

Several speakers at the conference drew parallels with the later days of Rome. If only we were that well off. The savages who invaded the empire were robust and vigorous, and once Christianized, they took only five or six centuries to create a new civilization. I am not so hopeful for our descendants. The students at Zagreb University, to whom I lectured on something like the spur of the moment, were a little surprised by an American who refused to adopt a triumphalist tone. But the evidence of what is wrong with my country was abundantly present in this class of 200 bright and well-groomed students, many of whom were not even registered in this faculty, much less this course. Their questions showed how much they actually understood of my rather dangerous talk on federalism, and wherever the conversation went—from population ecology to ethnic cleansing—they were prepared to follow.

Rebecca West found the Croats to be the most intellectual people in Europe. Even so, I am impressed. The students came, not to hear me, but to listen to former Deputy President Zdravo Tomac, who is giving a series of lectures on the new government of Croatia. It is not only that they seem to be better educated than their American counterparts, it is that quite apart from hours and credits they are genuinely interested in ideas, especially ideas that have some bearing on their national future.

I meet an English-Croat graduate student who has only recently begun visiting what he regards as his country. (I meet more than one American in similar circumstances.) He tells me quite grandly that Croats have always been seduced by other nations—Venetians, Austrians, Hungarians, and (worst of all) Serbs—but now it is time for them to go it alone. I wonder, aloud, if it would not be a good idea to establish closer economic and political ties with Austria, Hungary, the Czech Republic, and perhaps Northern Italy (once it is liberated). A union for trade and even currency, yes, but he is adamantly against a political union.

For myself, I cannot shake the suspicion that I am in a province of Austria-Hungary. Few people speak English, but my little bit of German is repeatedly called on to pinch-hit for my Croatian. The Mandir family watch television as they pack clothes, switching easily from Croatian to German stations, and everywhere in Zagreb, the great historical monuments connect them with the dual monarchy.

One evening I attend a special mass being celebrated for two groups that are meeting simultaneously in Zagreb, the Chesterton Society and the Paneuropean Union. Deciding on language must have been a difficult task. The bishop speaks in German for his announcements and sermon. The scripture readings are in German, Croatian, English, and even French. What a babel the whole affair might have been, were it not for the mass itself, sung beautifully in Latin by as good a choir as I have heard.

Outside the streets are miserable, pelted by snow and sleet in which I have been walking ankle-deep all day. Later that night I shall find myself abandoned nearly a mile from Fratrovac—the cab cannot make the hill, and standing there shivering, waiting for others to arrive, I

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begin to think I can hear wolves howling across the snowy fields. The English and Americans begin talking, despondently, of Napoleon's retreat from Moscow, but the Poles rise to the occasion. It is only at this moment that I realize what a strange and wonderful people the Poles are. While the rest of us are practicing the fine art of the whine, they are laughing, telling fanciful tales, bantering with a language in which the absurd meets the sublime. In a moment, we are all laughing together like idiots and slogging merrily back to the seminary, where we drink every last drop of wine and liquor we can lay our hands on.

The unseasonable storm has paralyzed the resources of postcommunism, and the only plow I have seen was clearing the snow in front of the parliament building. Smiling clerks cannot find my faxed messages; cars fail to materialize; even the telephones go on the fritz; and I find it easy to make generalizations about *Homo yugoslaviensis*.

Here in the cathedral, though, is a real Croatia, pious and possessed of a sober dignity not untinged by mysticism, and I remember something Louis Frankopan told me. The Frankopans are among the most ancient Dalmatian families and provided the last (I believe) native Ban. Count Frankopan remarked that Croatia was important to Europe as a Catholic nation that incorporated some of the mysticism of the Eastern church, and at this moment I see that it is precisely in religion that the Serbs and Croats are most closely bound.

I have great difficulty following the bishop's remarks. He says a number of nice things about G.K. Chesterton, before going on to a subject closer to his heart, the president of the Paneuropean Union, Otto von Hapsburg. The latest Hapsburg, who has renounced the throne, is present to read some of the lessons and prayers, and the bishop pays a moving tribute to his "*königlich, kaiserlich Hoheit*." How many Croats share this enthusiasm for the royal and imperial highness, a poor Jeffersonian suspicious of princes has no way of knowing, but here in this cathedral, in a service whose form and language once bound all European man together, in the presence of the last claimant to a throne that represented an order both holy and Roman, I marvel, almost in tears, at how much blood was shed, how many cities ruined, how many insane projects erected upon the bones of Christian peasants and merchants in this terrible century, which for me, here in Zagreb, is closing on the long reverberating note of an organ playing music composed long ago somewhere in Christendom.

Thomas Fleming is editor of Chronicles.

Letter From Bosnia

by Momcilo Selic

The Serbs of Ozren Mountain

"Let me marry / Or buy me a banjo / For I must pluck / At something!" sings Milosh Dragichevitch, a Serb from Ozren Mountain in Bosnia. Milosh is a 50-year-old whose eyes twinkle darkly as he laughs at jokes about Serbs and Turks, made up by someone diabolical, somewhere in Bosnia. "Two Red Berets," he says, "come upon the border crossing with the 'Federal Republic of Yugoslavia' and ask whether all three of them must show their papers. 'Which three of you?' asks the border guard, 'when I see only two?' 'But,' says one of the Red Berets, 'what about Hassan here?' and he takes out the severed head of a Muslim from his traveling bag."

The Ozren Serbs laugh, and Vaskersiye Petkovitch strums his long-necked mandolin, called a *shargiya*, spinning off a fast, furious, angry Ozren Serb tune smacking of bagpipes and dark, dark bygones. "All their tunes," wrote Sir Arthur Evans (the discoverer of Mycenae) of Bosnian Serbs in 1875, "are contaminated by the accursed bagpipes, even if that instrument has—over time—been transformed into others!"

As for the severed "Turk" head mentioned in Milosh Dragichevitch's joke, it is entirely possible: Red Berets, a crack Serb unit, have been known to sneak into Muslim trenches and carve up their occupants. Red Berets, young, disciplined, deadly warriors initially trained by the mysterious Captain Dragan at a Kraina training camp, have scores to settle, long left untended.

Milosh Dragichevitch, whom I have known since college, first told me the story of Mitcho Stupar, our friend who always smiled like a wistful boy. Blond, pale Stupar never talked much, but Milosh told me that Stupar had seen his whole family—seven brothers and sisters, his father and his mother—butchered with knives by the Croat and Muslim Ustashi back in 1943. A child of seven then (and a diplomatic official of Yugoslavia today), Stupar ran off into the forest and slept in a hollow tree for seven days and nights. Stupar is now divorced, because his second wife, like his first, could not stand his screams when he dreamt of his parents and siblings.

Though I have known Milosh for close to 30 years, it took the renewed Serbo-Muslim-Croat war for him to tell me of his father, whom the Croat and Muslim Ustashi, many from the neighboring town of Grachanitza, collected in the spring of 1942 and sent to Jasenovac, the Croat death camp. "I dream of my father," says Milosh, "though I don't remember his face. I dream of him more and more, as I grow older. The memory does not fade—my father's face has started to twitch, and move, to come alive from his wedding photograph." "The Ustashi," he says seriously, "are losing *their* faces, which I have always, in my dreams, seen as the faces of the Muslims from across the river. *They* are becoming mere walking slabs of flesh, with red, raw butchers' fingers and white aprons, over their black, spotless SS uniforms." Milosh is a kind and gentle man, an architect whom I can't imagine getting angry; his face, however, for a moment appears rock hard and his eyes glint like black, polished granite before he remembers himself and smiles. Like most Ozrenians, he smiles like a child caught daydreaming. His other nightmares he keeps to himself, as he has kept the story of his father's death from me for three decades.

The Commandant at Vozutcha, a Serb village at the very southern tip of Ozren Mountain, is an unsmiling man, but then he's not an Ozrenian. He's from Banovitchi, a small Muslim town not far off, from which he escaped in March 1992, a month before the Bloody Wedding of Sarajevo on April 6.

April 6 for the Serbs is the same as Pearl Harbor Day for the Americans. On April 6, 1941, my mother was awakened by the Nazi bombing of Belgrade, the worst after Rotterdam and Warsaw. April 6, 1941, was when it all started: Milosh's silence and Mitcho Stupar's nightmares and the Commandant's grandfather's renewed battle with the

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"Turks" (all Serbs outside of Serbia proper call the Muslims "Turks," as the Muslims insisted on calling themselves until 1918 and their defeat in the Great War). With April 6, 1941, began my own family's extinction, with the loss of three paternal uncles, my grandfather, and my maternal aunt.

So, on April 6, 1992, someone in Vienna, Bonn, or Berlin, gave the nod to Alija Izetbegovic to start his march toward an Islamic State of Bosnia. (What the Teutonic policymakers had in mind, when they decided to destroy the former Yugoslavia and start anew the Balkan horror show, I do not know, nor do I, or Milosh Dragichevitch, or Mitcho Stupar, or anyone else I know, care. History shall judge them, as well as God, who, so far, has not been forgiving of them.) This was the day a Muslim gunman in Sarajevo shot at a Serb wedding party, killing the father of the groom, wounding the priest, and burning the church flag (the colors of the Serb Orthodox Christian Church—red, blue, and white—are the same as the Serb national colors). This was not, however, as the Commandant reminded me, when the current mess started. For a decade prior to that, Commandant, a young Serb, was made uneasy in his hometown of Banovitchi by taunts and subtle hints that he ought to move to Serbia, where all other pig Christians live.

Sometimes the hints (or instructions) were given with a smile, other times before or during a fight in the schoolyard or in the street. The Commandant was once stabbed by a Muslim schoolmate, but his father, a Communist Party stalwart, would not press charges; he did not want to endanger the fragile Bosnian "Brotherhood and Unity." (That was in 1985, when—according to today's wistful Western "analyst" reports—all was well and humming with the multinational, multicultural, multiconfessional mosaic of Bosnia and Herzegovina, as well as of Yugoslavia itself.)

When the war between the Bosnian Serbs, on the one hand, and German-goaded Bosnian Muslims and Croats, on the other, began, the Commandant was not surprised, but his Marxist father was. Despite all the federal money invested in Bosnia, despite all the brand-new roads, schools, hospitals, factories, and power plants, despite all *progress*, the Commandant's father, mother, and young sister had to leave Banovitchi a week after April 6, because Muslim "militia" had twice visited their apartment, purportedly searching for their son. The first time, the Muslims—former friends and neighbors—took the family's color TV set, their VCR, and the 3,000 German marks the Commandant's father had set aside for hard times. The second time was punctuated by gunfire, at the family's refrigerator and electric stove, after which a Muslim fighter with a green Islamic headband told the Commandant's father that the next time they came, their bullets would be aimed elsewhere.

The trip to Belgrade was long and arduous, past Muslim checkpoints where some women and girls were fondled by the "militia"; the Commandant's father, all his life a fervent internationalist and leftist, had been quite sure that his idol, Josip Broz Tito, had found the golden formula for successful and fulfilling "togetherness," yet 1941 was repeating itself, when *his* father—and the Commandant's grandfather—had to leave for the hills and fight for his life as Belgrade itself was occupied by the merciless Germans.

The "Dark Country," as the Bosnians themselves call their land, had, for decades, been inhospitable to its Serbs, but the Commandant's father had tried not to see it, confident that his place in the communist hierarchy—and the need for token Serbs in the administration, the arts, and the economy—would save him, and his family, from the fate of hundreds upon hundreds of thousands of Bosnian Serbs who had had to leave their homeland since the early 1960's in search of peace of mind. In his native Banovitchi, he kept busy as poets Gojko Djogo and Rajko Nogo were hounded out of Sarajevo for singing of Serbs and their myths instead of "brotherhood and unity," communism with a human face, or the joys of consumerism. He even spoke out against Mesha Selimovitch, a Muslim novelist who had gone to Belgrade, said that he was a Serb of Muslim faith, and decried Yugoslav Nobel Prize-winner Ivo Andric's pages describing the Bosnian Muslims as renegades, militants, and fanatics.

"Bosnia," wrote Alexander Hilferding, Russian Consul-General in Sarajevo in 1856, "is a country where the three Slavonic faiths: the Roman Catholics, the Serb Orthodox, and the Muslims hate each other with a passion exceeding only their hate, and mistrust, of all other foreigners, whether Frank or Ottoman." Tito, the obscure adventurer foisted upon Yugoslavia by Eleanor Roosevelt, Winston Churchill, and Joseph Stalin, recognized Bosnia's potential for ethnic shuffling, affirmative action, government intervention, and wealth redistribution long before the present champions of the New World Order. Like the Ottomans before him, who, in the words of Sir Charles Eliot, Secretary of the British Embassy at Constantinople from 1893 to 1898, "aided the minorities in their realm against the majorities" in order always to have the upper hand over the kit and kaboodle of them, Tito shrewdly foreshadowed today's action by the "International Community," the nascent World Government (United Nations), and NATO for the same reasons.

And so the Commandant's father got caught by his own gullibility and lack of honor: before he left for Serb Ozren, the Commandant, a just-graduated economist, had told his parent that he was a fool to trust in the goodwill of people who had met each invading army over the last 100 years with the cry "Here come our men!" Standing, speechless—one with fury, the other with frustration—the Commandant and his father had parted, the Commandant to sit with us on a porch in Bolyanitch, on Ozren Mountain, the father to queue up in Belgrade for U.N. handouts and to pore over the news from Bosnia, Geneva, New York, and elsewhere, where men who did not know him were—in bad faith—to decide his fate.

As we listen to Vaskersiye Petkovitch spin off another tune on his *shargiya*, we know that Ozren Mountain will not give in, regardless of who signs what, where, and for whose soul and honor's sake. Like Serbs everywhere, Ozrenians do not believe in contracts between crooks and swindlers, and they will not suffer to play the fools. Our host, Branko Sofrenitch, an electrical engineer who gave up his secure and well-paying executive's position in Panchevo, Serbia, to return to native Ozren and Bosnia as soon as the war started, smiles at Milosh's cracks about an old Muslim *hoja* (priest) who remained silent on a train when a young Serb asked him for the time of day. "Why," the *hoja*'s wife asked her husband later, "did you not answer the young man?" And the *hoja* looked at his wife like a tired, battered, wise old man and said, "By Allah, if I had answered the *giaour*, he would have asked me this and that and finally said that he had no place

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to stay, and I would have had to call him to sleep over with us, and then he would have seen our daughter Merima, and she would have fallen in love with him, and they would have married, and who the hell needs a son-in-law who doesn't even own a watch?"

Branko Sofrenitch, with the rest of us, roars with laughter, but not so much at the joke itself (he has heard it before), as at the way Milosh revels in it and at the way we, Belgrade Serbs, enjoy his homemade brandy, gulped out of a bottle with hand-picked herbs of his own choice.

"I must tell you," says Sofrenitch, "of how violins are made," and he drags out a half-dozen instruments in various phases of construction. For Branko Sofrenitch is a violin-maker as well, besides being an engineer, a corporate man, and a warrior. He goes on to tell us, laughingly, how he chooses a maple in the woods, cuts it down, and cures it before painstakingly carving it into the shape of an instrument fit for masters.

"Canada," says Sofrenitch, "has all sorts of maple, but no 'ribbed' maple good for the fiddle," and he smiles mischievously. Sofrenitch is a small, wiry man, full of good humor and pep, a true Ozren Serb, because he regards a long face as a shortcoming. Blue-eyed, he looks at us, and asks his son to bring us some more brandy, bacon, and cheese, for the world's a grim place as it is, and the best we can do is enjoy it, or laugh in its face.

Sofrenitch's son is a strapping 16-year-old, and his daughter is two years younger: Branko has brought both of them into the war zone, for, to him, Ozren's freedom is nonnegotiable. The young man is silent and watchful—he speaks only when spoken to and looks us visitors in the eye, knowing that the Ozren Order is older than the New World Order, or anybody else's idea of what constitutes sound—anthropological, sociological, or political—wisdom.

And so we tuck away our *shargiya* and leave, the stopover at Sofrenitch's over, with many more miles of Ozren to cover before returning to Belgrade and trying to do something about the insane "peace plan" championed by the "international community" and by Serbs faint of heart, who would leave Ozren and its 120,000 Serb Orthodox Christians in an Islamic state. (In Kuwait, for example, over half a million Christians are allowed only a single church, which must not display the cross and must have no bell or bell-tower.)

Since the Turkish occupation of Bosnia in the 16th century, there was never a mosque on Ozren Mountain, as no one there, ever, turned Muslim; even during World War II, when Milosh Dragichevitch's father and 400 other Serbs were tricked into capture and execution (they were summoned by the Croat and Muslim government to register as taxpayers in Petrovo Selo before being rounded up and shipped, like so much cattle, to Jasenovac, which so many Croat spokesmen are trying to write off as a place that did not exist or where only 30,000 Serbs, Gypsies, and Jews were exterminated instead of over half a million, as hundreds of excavated mass graves attest)—even then the enemy did not enter Ozren Mountain, except in April 1943, when over 40,000 Ustashi were defeated by some 3,000 Ozren Chetniks. Whoever has designed Bosnian "peace" without considering the wishes of the Ozren Serbs has—on purpose, or out of sheer ignorance, or, even worse, out of malice or stupidity—laid out the groundwork for the next 100 years of war. Aiding the "underdog" (in the case of Bosnia, the Muslims) is the best way to have Bosnia and Herzegovina on CNN well into the next century. Moreover, to speak of today's Bosnian Muslims as an "oppressed minority" would be akin to claiming similar status for the Nazis in Europe, or for the descendants of Genghis Khan in, say, Warsaw.

Today, even in Spain—whose own *Reconquista* has lasted over 700 years—there is clamor against Serbs trying to reunify their ethnic territories, torn away from them over centuries of criminal intervention by various "international communities." Ozren Serbs will not stand back and suffer any foreign troops—U.N., NATO, or other—to patrol their territory and referee "justice" to them. Much less will they accept any "law," "international" or otherwise, which boils down to a dictate to die so that someone can play Santa Claus to antiwhite, anti-European, anti-Western powers whose eminence is, in historical terms, a mere spark in the millennia of their darkness.

As I shake hands with Vaskersiye Petkovitch, a blond, silent, respectful giant of a man, I know that he—soft-spoken and given to music as he is—will personally cut to pieces any man who signs away his birthright to Ozren Mountain, where Serbs have built Christian monasteries since the 13th century. Vaskersiye's ancestors are buried in one of them, generation after battling generation, and Vaskersiye can no more leave them than he can leave his son and daughter, living in a hamlet close to Branko Sofrenitch's village of Bolyanitch.

Vaskersiye, a civil engineer, gestures with his huge palm and says, "Though it is war, we are building a highway through our Mountain! So far, the Turks and the Commies have kept us in the boondocks, but all we need is a year without shooting. Next time you come to Ozren, the 50 miles of our length you will cover in half an hour, instead of trundling around in a jeep, four hours at a stretch!"

I wave at them all and go, to write this account of ethnic cleansing, massacres, mass rapes, and concentration camps, all committed *against* my people for centuries and transformed in this magnificent age into libel, defamation, and an arraignment of *us*, for having survived.

Momcilo Selic is a writer and journalist living in Belgrade. He was imprisoned by the communist government in Yugoslavia for satirizing the cult of the leader. He was managing editor of Chronicles *from 1987-1989.*

Letter from New Celtia

by T. Padraig Higgins

Don't Call Me Anglo

◆

As America's melting pot rapidly cools, citizens are rushing to align themselves with their proper tribe and then petition the government for special treatment to redress historical grievances. While blacks, American Indians, and Hispanics already bear the governmental imprimatur of the oppressed, Asians made a key step toward achieving official victim status in 1992 by getting the United States Commission on Civil Rights to issue a 233-page report that outlines myriad injustices. And at the City University of New York, one of the largest

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public universities in the country, one victim group entitled to preferential treatment to remedy "past discrimination" is—the Italians. Only in New York.

In considering this phenomenon, it occurred to me that virtually the only ethnic group that has not made a claim for victim status is the one that has been the most oppressed throughout history—my own. In fact, the average American is so insensitive to our plight that we are often confused with and referred to as "Anglos," as profound an ethnic slight as could possibly be given. Today, let's set the record straight: Don't Call Me Anglo. I am an Oppressed Celt.

The Celts were the Original Europeans, those who settled the Continent from the Atlantic to Germany, from Northern Italy to Britain and Ireland. The primary descendants of the once-great Celtic nation are the Irish, the Scots, the Welsh, and the Bretons, and so Americans who trace their heritage to any of these folks have a blood claim to historical oppression. Celtic-Americans are entitled to join the fight on this continent for Celt rights and demand government-enforced preferential treatment just like other successful ethnic victims.

The first thing the Celts have to do is get touchy about our name. Based on our ancient language, we should prefer Celts with a hard "c," unlike the Boston Celtics basketball team, which not only mispronounces our name, but also is a classic example of insensitive Celtic stereotyping. According to the Boston logo, the Celt is sly and short, smokes cigars, and wears funny hats. This is ethnic slander, as proved by my own family: while I may fit all four parts of the description, my mother only smokes a cigar on Christmas and at least two of her hats are not funny in the least. I hope the Oregon newspaper that refuses to identify the Atlanta Braves, Cleveland Indians, and Washington Redskins by their offensive nicknames will show similar sensitivity to the plight of the Celts next time the Portland Trailblazers go to Boston.

And what a plight it is, even though many Celtic-Americans do not know how oppressed they are. To borrow from that great Celt, the Irish King Diarmaid, "To every cow her calf"—and for Celts, it is way past milking time.

The key requirement for victim status is oppression, and the Celts have a fine history of losing major battles. In the Battle of Alesia in 52 B.C., Julius Caesar defeated the Celts in what is now central France, and the Romans began pushing us north and west. Then the Celts took it from the Big White Worldwide Oppressor, the Anglo-Saxon. (Bear in mind that the legendary King Arthur was a Celt fighting the invading Saxons.) While warring almost continuously with the Anglo-Saxons, the Celts were also invaded by Vikings, Danes, and Normans. The Anglos ultimately defeated all the local Celtic tribes: our Cornish Celtic brothers succumbed in the sixth century, the last true Prince of Wales was Llewellyn II in 1282, the Irish have been a colony on and off for 800 years or so, and the Scots got whipped once and for all at the Battle of Culloden in 1746. Meanwhile, on the Continent, the Bretons lost their independence in 1488 and were later slaughtered by the French during the Revolution. Throughout recent history, the Celts were the team that everybody wanted to play.

But oppression alone will not qualify you for victim status in America—your culture must have seen better days. For Celts, our Golden Age was 2,000 years ago when we ruled Europe. Today, well, let's just say that the unspeakable Irish songstress Sinead O'Connor is probably the most prominent Celtic cultural icon in the world. In the not-so-distant past, if a visiting foreign scold like Sinead O'Connor refused to allow the host country's national anthem to be played before her performance (as she did in New Jersey) or ripped up a picture of the Pope in public (as she did on television), the locals would subject her to public ridicule by cutting off all her hair and parading her around. Miss O'Connor's curious grooming accomplishes such sport on its own, but what about a good dousing?

Americans are also impressed if the hopeful victims have a claim for historical justice that is so broad in scope as to be virtually unappeasable without great transfers of land and wealth. While our ultimate goal is the return of Greater Celtia (which is, roughly, all of Western Europe), here in America we want a homeland—New Celtia. After all, St. Brendan of Ireland discovered America in the sixth century, way before Christopher Columbus, the Vikings, or the Africans (as some now claim). That leaves the Indians, and we're happy to split it with them. To show how reasonable Celts are, we're willing to divide the country in two over the next ten years or so, but in the meantime America can start making amends for our oppression by giving us Georgia: nice climate, lots of good bars in Savannah, and a pretty good baseball team in Atlanta. In the 1996 Olympics in Atlanta, we can showcase Celtic culture like the Catalonians did in Barcelona in 1992, introducing the world to traditional Celtic games like the Dead Enemy Warrior Head Toss or the Two Liter Hootch Distillation Marathon, where contestants can use only fresh mountain water and a spadeful of peat.

Another major factor for American ethnic victims is whether the ancient culture is politically correct by 1990's standards. Celts were the original tree-huggers—we literally worshipped oaks. And Celtic women like Boudicca didn't sit at home and bake cookies—she led an armed revolt against the Romans in Britain in the first century, her red hair flowing and her hands bloody with gore, ultimately killing herself rather than surrendering to the Centurions. It is not hard to imagine Boudicca in today's world as a National Abortion Rights Action League organizer and member of the Hemlock Society.

Finally, Americans will not roll out the gold for you on the basis of guilt and admiration alone—there must be some element of a threat to the peace if the ethnic group's demands are not met. Europeans know that the Celts can get nasty on issues of ethnic self-determination: Breton nationalists planted over 200 bombs in France in the late 1970's (including ten bombs at Versailles), the Scottish separatist movement of recent years has at times exceeded the bounds of decent political discourse, and the Irish are still hurling bombs at the English. If we can get Celtic radicals and rap groups to espouse murder, violence, and other kinds of civic irresponsibility on our fair shores, then the sky's the limit. In America today, if official victims engage in senseless riot driven by greed and avarice, it can be passed off as an uprising by the oppressed and will cause the official guilt machine to spit tax dollars out at the victim. Pretty neat trick.

True, if Celts get "affirmative action" our achievements will be tarnished by the sneaking suspicion that we are unqualified for our positions. We may engender ethnic animosity where none existed before, as good-hearted Anglos are displaced by Celts solely by virtue of our historical grievances. We will in essence

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be asking an innocent generation to pay a blood debt incurred in antiquity, and we may irreversibly damage the fabric of the American ethic of equal opportunity by advocating the idea that who you are is less important than what you are.

But Celtic-Americans should realize that tribal identity is the future in America, as indeed it may be throughout the world. The Cold War is over, and America seems bound to drop its old habits and join the New World Order. Instead of believing in quaint notions of unifying Americanness, the United States is set to look in the coming century toward other countries that it may be destined to resemble, such as Lebanon, Yugoslavia, and the former Soviet republics. It's time for the slumbering tribes to wake up and face the future, which is unfolding before our disbelieving eyes.

T. Padraig Higgins is a litigation attorney in New York City.

Letter From England

by Christie Davies

Fish Rights

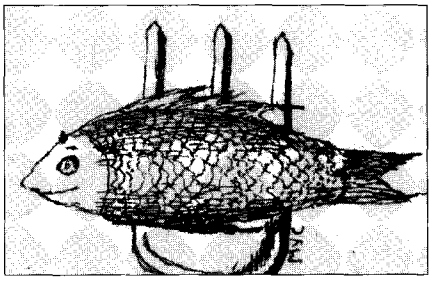
◆

Animal rights protesters in Britain have now extended their campaign of sabotage to fishing. Members of the new Campaign for the Abolition of Angling, with its headquarters in Sevenoaks in Kent, have taken to disrupting angling matches by stirring the water with bamboo canes and banging dustbin lids under water to drive the fish away. They have even put on diving suits and swum underwater to make faces at the fish and frighten them away from the anglers. They are demanding that the government impose new legal restrictions on anglers, including a compulsory written examination before a fishing license is granted, a ban on the use of live bait, and no fishing by children under 12 unless supervised by an adult. In the long run their even more militant successors will want fishing banned altogether, a view that will be strongly supported by the producers of lake and river pollution and acid rain.

They are not alone in their indignation, for many sensitive British animal lovers have long been appalled at the callous anglers' disregard for the sufferings of fish and the brutality with which fishermen regularly inflict all manner of cruelty and humiliation on our finny friends. They are particularly revolted by the popularity in Britain of the so-called sport of competitive fishing. Every weekend in England the shores and banks of lakes, rivers, and canals are lined with grim-faced men holding poles and wearing rubber boots hued according to social class: green for the gentry, black for the plebeians. The more audacious among them even don drizzleproof hats and waders and, abandoning the terrestrial life for which man was designed, mount an unnatural invasion of the waters, created specifically for the use of the fish and other sea creatures excused a trip in Noah's Ark. "Can it really be right," the anti-anglers ask, "for men to enter the sacred river and the sinless sea in this way?"

The most militant among them argue that, even if we ignore the indignities inflicted on impaled worms and the deceit involved in the use of a lure or a synthetic gleaming fly, fishing is clearly a morally repellent activity. There can be few ceremonial killings worse than that which succeeds the coarse shout of "a bite, a bite" along the shores of a normally peaceful stretch of water. Not for the hapless fish the quick death by bullet or shot of the grouse or stalked stag, nor the chance to make one last run for it granted to the fox, but the long agony of fighting against the hook. "How many anglers," demand the militant anti-fishers, "would like to be forced to sprint up and down the bank trying to free themselves from a person-hook baited with a cigarette or a piece of chewing gum by a cunning shark?"

When finally the helpless fish is landed it is left to flop, gasp, and drown in an air its fluttering gills cannot breath, or else it is trapped in a net more constraining than any cage. Later it may be cooked alive at the whim of a gourmet or cast aside to become a tid-bit for some complacent fishy-whiskered pussycat. If the fish is especially large its corpse may even be preserved in a glass case stuck above a grimy "real-ale" bar with a note of its dimensions, not as a tribute to a gallant fish, but to support the boasts of the cruel and mendacious anglers. This is the horrid reality behind the sentimental and heroic tales churned out by ichthyaphobes from Izaak Walton to Ernest Hemingway, which have ever served to reproduce the bigoted ideology of atmosphere-breathers' supremacy. "If fish could read," say the anti-anglers, "it would take their breath away."



The public conscience of much of the rest of Europe, and especially of those regions where there is nowhere to fish, has also been revolted by the gross inequality between the beings of land and water practiced in Britain. A strong movement for the rights of fishes has long been gathering force in the European Community, and Britain may well be faced with having to defend itself in a variety of Euro-courts against law suits brought by determined fish-lovers. Indeed, the radical Franciscan exponent of liberation theology, Amato Calamari (whose criticisms of Saint Peter caused so much controversy last year), has recently denounced the English as "not Angles, not angels, but anglers" and called for a boycott of Cornish pilchards.

More ominous still are the activities of the violent fish liberation front in France, which has been snipping anglers' lines with scissors and casting so much bread upon the waters that the sated fish ignore the beguiling baits held out by the rod-wielders. Fishmongers' shops have been daubed with the slogan "*Poissonier = Poison*," and there are fears that this new militancy could lead to the criminal contamination of tins of *snoek*. Of course most genuine fish activists deplore the use of violence and indeed see the brutality of the present world as a mere extension of unrestrained piscatorial aggression. Nonetheless there are many who feel that only in this way can the rights and liberties of fishes be attained and the dignity of aquatic creatures everywhere upheld. Right now I would not care to be in the shoes of the fishermen.

Christie Davies is chairman of the sociology department at the University of Reading, England.

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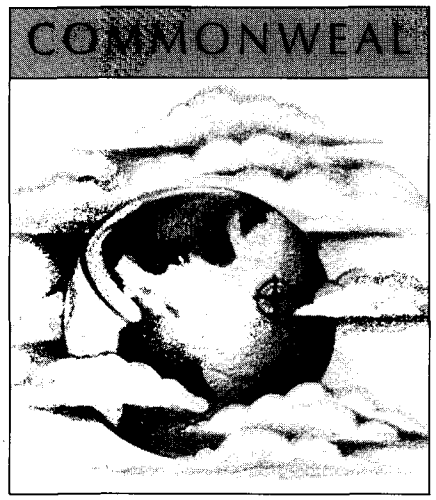

Anna Mycek-Wodecki

Real Men's Studies

by E. Christian Kopff

The negative critique of American education has grown from a mere trickle back when Albert Jay Nock delivered his lectures on *Theory of Education in the United States* at the University of Virginia in 1931 into a roaring flash flood. When the sound and fury of the various Jeremiahs of American education have ceased echoing in the halls of the nation's high schools and universities, we look around and see that little has changed—and that mainly for the worse. Rudolf Flesch tried to explain a generation ago *Why Johnny Can't Read*. When Beavis recently commented, "I hate videos with words in them," his comrade Butt-head assented, "Yeah. If I wanted to read, I'd go to school." *E' ben trovato, ma non e' vero*. Between videos, movies, computer games, rap sessions, and the use of Uncaptioned Visual Cues to supplement Oral-Aural methodologies, little reading takes place in the nation's schools. As French intellectual Regis Debray has explained in several (ironically) best-selling books, we have moved from the Logosphere to the Videosphere. We know the officers were guilty, not because we listened to evidence and arguments and read and pondered them, but because we saw the tapes. What classicist Eric Havelock called "The Literate Revolution" has been overturned. We have moved from the Civilization of Writing back to an oral culture.

One reason for the failure of traditionalist laments to stop the forces of change is their purely negative character. What is needed is a positive response to the contemporary American university and its glitzy supermarket of alternatives and electives. A few years ago an associate dean noted to his curriculum committee that not only were there Women's Studies programs and departments galore in the American Megaversity, but more and more schools were introducing Men's Studies. One gloomy faculty member muttered in response that he would vote in favor of them, as long as they were Real Men's Studies. The administrator snorted in contempt, and we returned to our business of approving a new course on Lesbian Literature of the Black Renaissance. Not content to issue futile ukases like an academic King Canute against the rising tide of innovative new programs, I am presenting my tentative curriculum for a Real Men's major.

RMS 1001. Introduction to Real Men's Studies: Role Models and Wimps in American Cinema (cross-listed with Film Studies 1001). An introduction to the role of real men in contemporary American culture through an in-depth study of selected films starring John Wayne, Clint Eastwood, Sylvester Stallone, and Chuck Norris. Reports by students on how viewing these films changed their self-image.

RMS 1005. Real Men and Music (cross-listed with Music 1005). A survey of the history of Western music.

RMS 2001. Real Men and Sports (cross-listed with Kinesiology 2001). Class will concentrate on salary differentials between men's and women's sports, beginning with tennis. Class reports on why the Sports section is the only accurate part of the newspaper and what this means for the *Wall Street Journal*.

RMS 2345. Real Men's Humor (cross-listed with Creative Writing 2345). Oppressed minorities fight back with humor. As the latest addition to the world of the oppressed, Real Men have not yet developed their own distinctive, self-deprecating humor. This course will develop Real Men's creativity in this direction. Class begins with jokes modeled on the famous "How many does it take to screw in a lightbulb?" routine. Examples: How many real men does it take to invent a light bulb? One. Thomas Alva Edison. How many real men does it take to paint the ceiling of the Sistine Chapel? One. Michelangelo Buonarroti. Oral reports and written analyses of ethnic and real men's humor.

RMS 3001. Theory of Patriarchy (cross-listed with Philosophy 3001). Selected readings with discussion and oral and written reports on selected masterpieces of Real Men's literature and philosophy, including Genesis 1-3, St. Paul, John Knox, Robert Filmer, James Fitzjames Stephen, Steven Goldberg, and Thomas Fleming.

RMS 3470. Women and Ancient Mathematics (cross-listed with Biology 3470). A presentation of the genetic basis for women's contributions to ancient mathematics, compared and contrasted with the word of Eudoxus, Theactetus, Archimedes, and Euclid. Creative papers on what those two women were doing in Plato's Academy.

RMS 3510/3520. Junior Seminar: Topics in Real Men's Studies. Fall: Polygamy. Study of the history, philosophy, and social function of a widespread and important social custom. Spring: The Hunting Hypothesis. Study of the role of hunting in the development of religion, sex roles, and higher civilization.

RMS 4510/4520. Senior Seminar: Practicum in Real Men's Studies. Fall: The Defeat of the Equal Rights Amendment. A practicum on the use of public opinion and grass-roots politics to preserve and protect the role of Real Men in contemporary society. Spring: Real Men's Civil Rights: A Study of the History and Theory of the Second Amendment. Readings and reports on Livy, Machiavelli, and the Virginia Bill of Rights. Mandatory shooting practice twice a week.

The science requirement is 16 hours of lab sciences or mathematics. (There is no social science requirement.) The

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language requirement may be satisfied by four semesters of any language used to conquer substantial portions of the Mediterranean world or the Near East before the year 1000 A.D.

It is time to stop complaining about educational decline and start designing our own curricula. You see how easy it is. Your first assignment is to draw up a Real Men's reading list. No, no, not Tom Clancy and Louis L'Amour. Shakespeare's *Taming of the Shrew* and Milton's *Paradise Lost*. Now you're getting the hang of it. Go and do likewise.

E. Christian Kopff is a professor of Greek and Latin at the University of Colorado in Boulder.

Governor William Weld's Manly Agenda

by Martin Mawyer

Empower Queer Nation

Does Massachusetts Governor William Weld want to "Empower America" or "Empower Queer Nation"? Social conservatives who hold out an inkling of hope that "Empower America" might actually pay attention to their issues should take a closer look at Governor Weld's promotion of the homosexual agenda in public schools.

On February 10, 1992, Governor Weld "empowered" the public school children of Massachusetts by creating the nation's first Commission on Gay and Lesbian Youth. By signing Executive Order 325, and at the swearing-in of commission members on June 11, 1992, Governor Weld stated that there is a "tremendous need to address the difficult issues facing gay and lesbian youth." He also wants to "abolish the prejudice and isolation" faced by such children. Governor Weld was understandably partisan in naming members of the commission. Many are homosexuals. In fact, the chairman is David LaFontaine, lobbying director for the Coalition for Lesbian and Gay Civil Rights.

The commission's *Education Report*, "Making Schools Safe for Gay and Lesbian Youth," detailed Weld's and the gay lobby's demands: acknowledgment that kids are born homosexual; creation of social clubs for homosexuals; inclusion of homosexual propaganda in school libraries; teaching kids that homosexual sex is normal, natural, and healthy; no-fault parenting support groups; layers of bureaucracy to provide legitimacy and self-justification; an open school door to homosexual activists; "yellow pages" guiding kids to homosexual activities; reprimands for criticizing homosexuality; and taxpayer-funded legal services for homosexuals to agitate on campus.

One wonders if Bill Weld needs to be reminded that what he is talking about is a peculiar form of sex. Homosexuality is defined by a sex act, in this case sodomy. It is clear that a person cannot *homo* without the *sexual* any more than a person can *hetero* without the *sexual*. But unlike heterosexuality generally, homosexuality involves an obsessive, even pathological, desire for societal approval beyond individual conscience and one's close circle of friends. So it is no wonder that the homosexual movement's recommendations in the *Education Report* all focus on public approval and endorsement of the homosexual lifestyle.

The *Education Report* relies heavily on a 1989 youth suicide report by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) for legitimacy. Without a widely recognized social problem, no Weld Commission would be needed. To the homosexual movement, youth suicide is not unlike AIDS, for all practical purposes. Both tragedies have been used for political gain. AIDS has brought millions of state and federal tax dollars flowing into "community-based" homosexual groups, as well as facilitated an ever-expanding propaganda machine with which to influence public opinion, and youth suicide has added an important dimension to their overall goal of public acceptability.

The HHS report was released in three volumes. The third volume included extraneous contributions from various sectors of society. None of these extraneous reports, though published as additional reading on the subject, were deemed official or integral to the HHS report's recommendations. It was in this volume of extraneous material that a paper titled "Gay Male and Lesbian Youth Suicide" was placed. Of this paper then-HHS Secretary Louis W. Sullivan wrote, "I want to reemphasize that the views expressed in the paper entitled 'Gay Male and Lesbian Youth Suicide' do not in any way represent my personal beliefs or the policy of this Department. . . . Federal policies must be crafted with great care so as to strengthen rather than undermine the institution of the family. In my opinion, the views expressed in the paper run contrary to that aim." This position was seconded by the acting surgeon general.

This extraneous paper was the product of a San Francisco mental health counselor named Paul Gibson, who also happens to be a homosexual. From the way the *Education Report* relies on his testimony, the reader would think that Mr. Gibson was employed by HHS. One citation in the *Education Report*, page 10, even reads: "Paul Gibson, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services." This is clearly misleading.

Governor Weld relied on Gibson's "research" during the swearing-in of commissioners, stating, "nearly 30 percent of youth suicides are committed by gays or lesbians." The *Education Report* reiterates and highlights this "fact" time and again. If true, the claim would be significant. Thirty percent of anything nowadays is a substantial force. You could even be elected President of the United States with the vote of 30 percent of the population. Don't you think that if homosexual youth suicides really comprise a whopping 30 percent of all youth suicides that somebody would pick up on it other than Bill Weld and a handful of homosexuals?

The claim is obviously not true. The figure was cooked by homosexual psychoclinicians in one of many of their "scientific" surveys. There is little need to remind anyone of the fraudulent "10 percent" figure the homosexual movement has used for years to project a grander image. HHS, the very institution the Weld Commission relies upon for inspiration, reported as recently as March 1993 that homosexuality (whether referred to as gay or lesbian or sexual orientation, etc.) is such a *small* possible co-factor in youth suicides that it is not measurable ("Suicide Facts," National Institutes of Mental Health, March 1993). The Gallup Poll found the same thing (*Teenage Suicidal Study*, January 1991).

The pathology of homosexuality has created a fortress of lies and self-justifications from which gays advocate their lifestyle. Themes like "we are every-

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where" or "we are 10 percent of the population" or "we are little different than the rest of society" or even "we are 30 percent of all youth suicides" are all examples of the emotional and political insulation they build into their movement to buffer them from injury to their collective psyche. Every public utterance is designed to keep all discussions of their lifestyle away from its central element—a sex act. Any opposing voice which suggests that any of their platitudes are not true is silenced. To suggest that homosexuality is not as widespread or endemic to society as they believe will get you the label "homophobic." In other words, any opposition is grounded in mental illness. This accusatory posture is merely the psychological projection of a group that has been traditionally labeled mentally ill itself.

The Weld Commission's *Education Report* is chock-full of false premises, misrepresentations, twisted reasonings, and self-justifications. One glaring example is the report's presumption of the fundamental existence of gay and lesbian youth. Indeed, just the use of the term "gay and lesbian youth" is an effort to imply their physiological existence. The Weld Commission knows that there is large disagreement in several communities (i.e., scientific, medical, religious, etc.) over the existence of homosexual orientation and that this argument revolves around whether homosexuals are born gay. There is no scientific proof—replicable scientific proof—that homosexuals are born this way. Of course, just because someone is born with a certain condition is not a license to do whatever he or she feels compelled to do. For instance, a person born with a chemical imbalance, and hence unmanageable, is viewed as ill or abnormal and is routinely treated to correct the problem. Society does not justify antisocial or self-destructive behavior simply because of the imbalance, even though people may have sympathy for the sufferer.

Common sense sheds further light on this subject. Consider an infant. Homosexual mythology would have us believe that this infant has a compulsive desire for anal or oral sex, in other words, homosexuality. Such a notion is, of course, ludicrous. That infant has no more desire or inclination for homosexual sex than it does for heterosexual sex or any kind of sexual experience. The child's developmental behavior is determined by its nurturing and environment. By the time puberty kicks in, a child has established patterns of behavior based on how he or she has been raised. An abusive early childhood can and does manifest itself in varying degrees of antisocial or self-destructive behavior. Alcoholism, substance abuse, violence, reclusion, and sexual promiscuity are all evidence of earlier problems. They can also be evidence of current problems created by liberal destruction of social norms or even familial abuses. All of this is common sense. No one has ever needed a special degree to figure this out.

There truly is no such thing as homosexual youth per se. There are confused youth, abused youth, molested youth, selfish youth, indulged youth, and rejected youth. But to say that kids are homosexual by birth is nonsense and has never been proved by either science or medicine. The Weld Commission is grasping for a legitimacy that simply does not exist.

The queerest of all ironies pronounced by the Weld Commission is perhaps the self-flagellation in their report, which stands contrary to the movement's image of "Gay Pride." Traditionally, self-worth and pride have been independent of external pressures and opinions. Millions of Americans each day trudge through life managing to keep their chin up despite many personal struggles and obstacles. While outside support and love are helpful, certainly very few healthy people ultimately rest their entire happiness and emotional well-being on the opinions of others. When they do and fall into depression they are viewed as "not well." Culpability has traditionally been with the individual not someone else.

Americans are increasingly shifting blame and accountability for their own actions to that catch-all "society," and the homosexual pathology of finding oneself in others, or nonaccountability, is just a small ripple in this rising tide. What sets the homosexual pathology apart from the rest of society is that it rests its *entire* emotional well-being on what others think. This is what causes homosexuals to be discontent with keeping their sexuality private. They have proven themselves obsessively compelled to seek public approbation for their behavior.

Great American men and women, people of creative genius and invention, have always been fiercely independent souls. Successful entrepreneurship is practically defined by going against conventional wisdom and peer pressure. Why, then, is such a seemingly independent movement so rigidly tied to what other people think of them? Successful minorities have always persevered despite popular opinions. Why not homosexuality? The answer is obvious. The pathological roots of homosexuality are abuse, dysfunction, and indulgence. These are not things to be proud of. No honest person can muster an ounce of inner strength in their defense. This is why "society" is the salvation of the homosexual movement. The only emotional support available to determined homosexuals is external. The more people in society affirm what defines the homosexual existence, namely a sex act, the greater the chance that the internal suffering can be drowned out.

Along these lines, the Weld Commission insists that homosexual youth need a special kind of support. The claim begs the question, what kind of support are we talking about? One request is for a large contingent of homosexual adult role models. In any other corner of the education community such provincialism is considered socially unhealthy. Parents are continually told that their kids should be exposed to diverse elements in the population. In fact, this is just what the homosexual movement claims. And yet here are the same homosexuals suggesting that the only adults who understand these special youth are homosexuals themselves. The Weld Commission makes crystal clear in its report that supportive adult heterosexuals can help protect a school environment from violence or bigotry but that it is the homosexual teacher who can best meet the needs of students pursuing a homosexual lifestyle. No doubt.

This raises a question about what these role models are to do. Unfortunately, despite the fact that as a community homosexuals excel quite nicely in the economy, not many popular homosexual role models exist who are not dying or have died from AIDS. A disease-ridden culture is a testimony against such role models. Providing adult homosexuals to bridge the gap for youths to enter comfortably this disease-ridden lifestyle is unconscionable. It amounts to nothing more than recruiting.

The kind of support for youth the Weld Commission is seeking is an infrastructure of acceptance for homosex-

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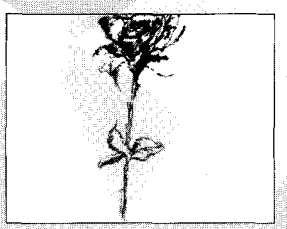
ual sodomy. The gay lobby's *raison d'être* involves neither skin color nor gender, nationality nor religion. It exists to promote a particular kind of sex act. Without it they are literally nothing in their own minds. In fact, homosexuals claim they would just as soon die without it. That is the pathology that the Weld Commission is asking the public to support.

Dozens of recent studies show that revising one's image of the family and the several roles to be played out within the family does not turn a grave situation bright. For decades liberal pundits and ideologues have attempted, and managed, to establish a new social conscience in which the liberation of the individual away from the family is exalted. Women were encouraged to leave small children in favor of a career, parents were encouraged to place their small children in daycare, divorce was given a liberating quality, and sexual prowess was elevated to new heights of acceptability. The traditional family was pronounced evil and detrimental to a progressive society. The opposite remains a proven truth.

Governor Weld's support of homosexuality detracts from the effectiveness of the traditional family—and the traditional family unit is the keystone to social, economic, and moral well-being. As a part of "Empower America," Governor Weld has isolated the family from social conservatives. And no amount of water can be carried by Bill Bennett to assuage them. The true test of their loyalty is to denounce Governor Weld's support of the homosexual agenda as dangerous and foolhardy.

Martin Mawyer is the president of Christian Action Network.

LIBERAL ARTS



RAINBOW-COLORED ROSES

The Los Angeles City Council voted last November to end the city's 96-year sponsorship of a float in the annual New Year's Day Rose Parade unless the Tournament of Roses includes women and minorities on its executive committee. The nine members of the committee are currently white, male volunteers with at least a quarter-century of service.

Defending Gun Ownership

by Paul Kirchner

Gun owners are often asked by friends, and rhetorically by politicians and the media, "How can you stand having a gun in your home?" Sometimes we try to bridge the gap by speaking of our love of hunting or target shooting or of our appreciation of the history and craftsmanship of firearms. But this evades the issue. It is the gun's purpose as a weapon, as a killing machine, that provokes such questions and that also makes firearms so precious to their owners.

Of the two primal purposes of a gun, hunting may no longer be necessary for survival, but self-defense is increasing in importance. When we defend ourselves we are looking not to kill, but to stop, immediately, the actions of a deadly aggressor. To do so we may have to kill, or threaten to kill. The alternative is submission, and a man who submits to violence may or may not survive; if he does he becomes a victim, one whose fate has been controlled by his aggressor, who may continue to prey on others. A civilized order cannot survive if decent men are resigned to be victims.

Almost as basic as self-defense is the defense of the individual against the state itself. If, in a democracy, power is in the hands of the people, then surely guns, the tools of power, belong there as well. As the bumper sticker puts it, "The Second Amendment ain't about duck hunting." Americans have chosen never to be helpless before their own government, and the right to keep and bear arms defines our status as free citizens. If that upsets Janet Reno and the BATF, well, that only hardens our resolve.

The smile that springs to a man's face when he handles a fine weapon is triggered by the feeling of security and self-determination it imparts, but also by an excitement. In the Timid New World of the nanny state, it is bracing to leave the playpen at times and get ahold of something dangerous, to hear the bang and feel the kick. A man doesn't want to go through life constantly having sharp objects removed from his reach. That a gun is deadly is part of its attraction, and not, I believe, in any pathological sense. The gun puts great power at one's command, but at the same time it imposes an absolute and unforgiving discipline on the man who accepts it. Not only must he master the gun, he must master himself. Meeting this challenge is one of the gratifications of gun ownership.

As the ultimate power tool, the gun is an unusually satisfying possession. Its mechanism is complex yet reassuringly comprehensible. It is better made than most personal effects, intended to last a lifetime and to be reliable under almost any condition. To function it requires only ammunition, an unusually durable commodity with an indefinite shelf life. This heirloom quality of the firearm appeals to those of us of the conservative temperament. Many of the tools we use every day pass through our lives like so much Kleenex. Our computers, stereo equipment, and electronic gadgets barely outlast their warranties and then are too obsolete to be worth repairing. A gun is something we can hang on to.

The often symbolic aspect of guns adds to their appeal. A friend purchased an Uzi to protect his home, and in his case I understood the choice. The Uzi is the "Kentucky rifle" of the state of Israel, and as an observant Jew, he felt added security and confidence with this historically important weapon. Clearly, a gun picks up some of the honor or ignominy of the causes it has served. The M-1 Garand reminds us of World War II, just as the AK-47 is a more fitting symbol of world communism than the hammer and sickle. The gun also acquires a piece of its owner's soul through long association and use, especially dramatic use. That's the mystique of the personal weapons of famous gunmen, such as Jesse James, Billy the Kid, Theodore Roosevelt, Melvin Purvis, John Dillinger, and General Patton. There is a special feeling about father's hunting rifle or the handgun that has been the family's bulwark for a generation. As a child I oc-

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casionally got into my father's army trunk and examined the pistol he had brought home from World War II. As a medical officer, he was not issued a weapon but commandeered one from a wounded German. He was glad to have it during the war, and years later the threat of it drove a burglar from our home. He had been in a world war and was prepared, as I saw it, to pick up his weapon again if necessary. Of all his possessions, it is the one I value most.

In recent years, the concern with self-defense has created a market for military-style semiautomatics, or assault weapons. Military-style semiautomatics have been available on the surplus market since the end of World War II, but the market for them did not explode until the 1970's with the advent of survivalism. Survivalism is an extreme vision of self-defense, but if you think this attitude is rare, confined to the likes of David Koresh, then you travel in different circles than I do. Many who don't consider themselves survivalists witness the impotence of authorities in the face of crime and rioting and find that they too require powerful reassurance. As weaponry, these guns range from the excellent to the preposterous, but all convey a deadly seriousness. Their black plastic stocks, pistol-grips, ventilated barrel sleeves, bayonet lugs, and flash hiders flaunt their status as killing machines. These accoutrements are more cosmetic than functional, but they provide the desired look of menace, like war paint. And it is their brazen appearance that makes them an easy target for antigun forces, who assert, "They're not for hunting or target-shooting; they're designed only to kill!" Few on my side have the temerity to respond that, yes, indeed, that is their legitimate function.

Along with the handgun, the assault weapon draws the sharpest line between the differing views of gun ownership and raises the most basic questions. Is force a constant in our world? Can we evade it, deny it, rise above it? Are we helpless in the face of it, our safety best entrusted to others, or to fate? Or do we accept the reality of force, master it, and resolve to use it if need be?

Some of us recoil from the gun, thinking, "With this, how easily life can be taken." Others pick it up and say, "With this, my life will not be taken easily."

Paul Kirchner writes from Hamden, Connecticut.

Canadian Populism

by Donald I. Warren

Alive and Well

"October Revolution" is probably an apt description of Canada's 1993 parliamentary elections, as the month marked the enthronement of a left-oriented political establishment and the ejection of the ruling Conservatives. The Liberal Party's sweep to an absolute majority meant the relegation of the Tory Progressive Conservative Party to virtual extinction (it now holds only two parliamentary seats). Also noteworthy was the emergence of the separatist *Bloc Québécois*, although its overall vote total was only 12 percent. While given scant attention in the American media, the remarkable second-place finish of the Reform Party, with an impressive 19 percent slice of the electorate, calls for a closer look at what is brewing in our continental backyard.

Founded a mere five years ago, the Reform Party (in this—its second—national election) has grown from one to 52 seats, coming within a hair's breadth of being named the formal opposition, a position now occupied by the *Bloc Québécois* with its 53 seats. The winds of middle-class anger that swept from Canada's western provinces embody a rejection of establishment political elites on both the right and the left. Specifically, the Reform Party is heir to a lost sense of Canadian radical conservativism, more accurately described as an anti-big government populism seeking to restore a cultural identity to Canada's middle class. Based in the oil-rich province of Alberta, its tax-reductionism, anti-multiculturalism, and anti-welfare statism echo the "new politics" now found on both sides of the Atlantic, and its success in last year's election came as no surprise to those familiar with Canada's declining economic health. A 1991 report on public discontent had spoken of a "fury in the land."

Anchored in Calgary, the Reform Party is rooted in the Depression-era Social Credit movement headed by a media-savvy monetary reformer named William Aberhart. This talented clergyman had founded a Bible school prior to becoming the charismatic exponent of the ideas of Major C.H. Douglas, the British military officer-turned-social thinker. In a startling victory, Aberhart led the newly created party to power in 1935. After five years of governing, Social Credit lost its popular support but persisted as a doctrine of populist agitation from British Columbia to Quebec.

Six decades later, the seemingly quiescent ghost of western Canadian populism has been resurrected in a party led by Preston Manning, son of one of the original organizers of Social Credit. Hardly a figure of captivating charm, the man with the visage of a mild-mannered "Clark Kent" has a fierce reputation as the "Superman" of the forgotten Canadian middle class. As one biographer matter-of-factly observes, "It is unusual in Canada for a political figure or a political party to arrive quickly and decisively on the national stage"; in fact, Preston Manning quietly trained for two decades before following in his father's footsteps. (Achieving much but never gaining any national prominence, Ernest Manning had staked out a career as premier of Alberta for 25 years and was revered by many as a virtual saint.) What drew the younger Manning from the political wilderness to assume aggressively his father's commitment to the major political realignment of Canada was the Movement for National Political Change that began in 1978. Central to this enterprise was the idea that Canada's major parties were headed toward the destruction of the nation and its key economic and social values.

By the early 1980's, a discernible prairie wildfire of populist anger began sweeping the land. In its wake lay an initially fragile coalition of rural and urban splinter groups organized under the rather prosaic title of the Alberta Political Alliance. With Preston Manning's skillful nurturance, this entity formed, in 1987, the nucleus of a second wave of Canadian political populism known as the Reform Association of Canada. While other Reform Association members restricted themselves to thinking in terms of provincial power, Manning set his sights on Ottawa and national politics from the organization's inception.

In a speech delivered during the party's first national electoral campaign in 1988, Manning declared the historic mission of the Reform Party to be the replacement of the Conservative Party, which he described as hampered by its "congenital inability to govern." With its free-trade and low-tax platform, the

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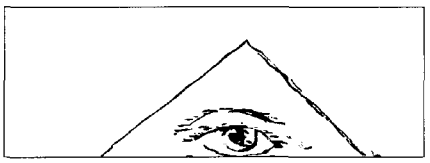
Reform Party indeed paralleled the stance of Mulroney's ruling party; success therefore depended on Tory displacement. In this first electoral outing, Reform captured seven percent of the vote in the western provinces of Canada, but its share of the total vote was barely over two percent; it elected but a single member of Parliament.

Central to the discontent emanating from western Canada, and Alberta in particular, was the economic imbalance of a prosperous oil and agricultural heartland taxed by and subordinated to the provinces of the east with their large social welfare budgets and obsession with Quebecer demands for greater power and autonomy within the confederation. In 1989, Manning set as his goal the erosion of the political monopoly enjoyed by the traditional right and left in the country's eastern provinces. Four years later, the evidence—19 percent of the national vote resulting in the election of more than four dozen members of parliament—suggests that the Reform Party will play a major role on the national stage of Canadian politics. Following its dramatic gains in October, Reform executive director Gordon Shaw boasted: "we expect to be the governing party in four years' time."

While standing for strict fiscal responsibility, the Reform Party is also dedicated to addressing the cultural issues confronting Canadian society. Key on its agenda is the slashing of the umbilical cord that binds the federal government to the aboriginal peoples of Canada and to the resolution of a variety of outstanding land claim negotiations. Reform recommends replacing the Department of Indian Affairs with self-governing institutions. Additionally, the party formally declared that it seeks to repeal the National Multiculturalism Act, as well as to abolish the Department of Multiculturalism. It opposes policies encouraging "hyphenated Canadianism" and urges "the integration of immigrants . . . into the mainstream of Canadian life." Restrictions on immigration would be aimed at maintaining a traditional distribution by socioeconomic level, if not by social origin.

Critical to the party's tax-reform agenda is the repeal of the GST, the value added levy imposed by the Tories in 1988. And, given its strong commitment to *laissez-faire* economics, the party supports free trade. In order to balance the federal budget, Reform calls for steep reductions in foreign aid and grants to social advocacy groups, as well as for the scaling down—but not elimination—of social welfare and health benefits, particularly those provided to new immigrants. Overall, the government is regarded as too big, too remote, too powerful.



In 1991, Manning expressed his preference for an American-style market economy, although he felt that "it could not be sold to the Canadian people at this point in time." In the party's "Blue Book" of principles, number 21 declares: "We believe that Canadians should seek to maximize the benefits of our unique geographic and economic relationship to the United States, and that the establishment of more positive relations with the U.S. need not in any way impair Canadian sovereignty or cultural identity." The Reform Party's affinity to several large U.S. oil, energy, banking, and investment corporations, as well as its links to South Africa, may give pause to some who see the party as an exponent of Canadian populism and nationalism. Dependence on U.S. capital investment in particular—something Preston Manning has made a point of favoring—would seem to run counter to the strengthening of small business and even larger enterprises at home.

Inevitably, comparisons of the Reform Party's Preston Manning to the personalities of Canada's southern neighbor may be offered. Such analogies abound, given that Alberta may be seen as perhaps the most American of Canada's provinces. Indeed, its history is traced to the migration of Americans who followed the grazing lands and oil fields north, with Calgary frequently being dubbed "North Dallas." Yet, when a leading newspaper proffered the headline "Canada's answer to Ross Perot taps discontent" following Reform's major electoral breakthrough, Manning bristled at the equation, labeled Perot "a lone-wolf political entrepreneur," and asserted, "We got started before Perot did."

While so much of the Reform Party's ideology and platform closely resembles the ideas set forth by Pat Buchanan in his 1992 bid for the Republican Party presidential nomination (especially on the cultural side, where Buchanan is the parallel, not Perot), the cautious and well-grounded organizational skills of Preston Manning set him apart from any American counterparts. What he has accomplished is the virtual destruction of a conservative party that seemed to fail in its mission, in a manner quite reminiscent of the Bush presidency.

Certainly it is hard to see in the choirboy features of Preston Manning either the Texas shrewdness and combativeness of Ross Perot or the savvy media toughness of Pat Buchanan. And yet Manning has achieved what even his harshest opponents acknowledge: the transformation of an anti-government protest movement into a viable new political presence in the very interstices of Canada's governing structure. As Manning himself indicated in his victory address, he intends to lead more than a rejectionist movement, but to accomplish what the Freedom Party's Jörg Haider has been able to achieve in Austria: making itself the catalytic force within the political arena that drives a timid establishment to confront the tough issues of the moment.

Rather than marginalizing the conservative philosophy in the public mind, Manning has instead offered a challenge to the "political class" of Canada that focuses on the authentic populist roots of governmental and economic decentralization, coupled with cultural nationalism. If this sounds like a "Canada First" approach, Reform stresses the need to retain the present confederation of coequal provinces linked through a core of values expressed in a majoritarian context rather than a multiethnic one.

If, in the wake of Canada's "October Revolution," that nation's Conservative Party is headed for the scrap-heap of history, does it portend anything for Canada's southern neighbor? One may anticipate that the Reform Party will create a new politics linking elements of traditional conservatism with those of grassroots populism. Admittedly inspired and even defined by an American model of free enterprise, the Reform Party is now positioned to do more than nay-say. In the cold and clear winter of its discontent, the U.S. Republican Party may well ponder such a movement.

Donald I. Warren is a political sociologist and the author of The Radical Center *(1976).*

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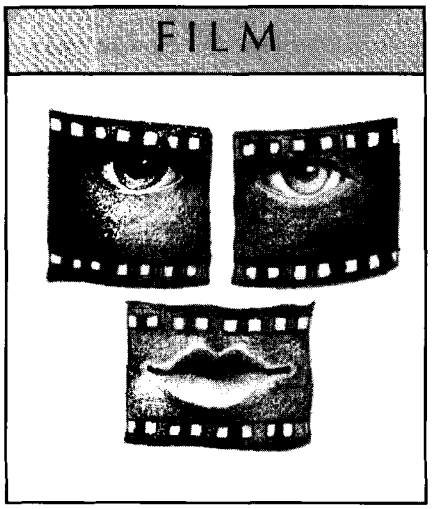

Anna Mecik-Wodecki

Theater of Cruelty

by David R. Slavitt

True Romance
Produced by Samuel Hadida, Steve Perry, and Bill Unger
Directed by Tony Scott
Screenplay by Quentin Tarantino
Released by Warner Brothers

Hard Target
Produced by James Jacks, Sean Daniel, Chuck Pfarrer, and Terence Chang
Directed by John Woo
Screenplay by Mr. Pfarrer
Released by Universal Pictures

Because of my enthusiasm for the verve of Quentin Tarantino's *Reservoir Dogs*, I would have wanted to catch *True Romance*, for which he wrote the screenplay, even without the interestingly diverse reviews. My appetite was only further whetted by the extraordinary range of the reviewers' comments, from the enthusiasm of Janet Maslin in the *New York Times* to the all but frenzied derision of David Denby in *New York* magazine. "The unspeakable *True Romance*," he wrote, "might have been conceived during a feverish night at Miss Heidi's. Overstimulated but glazed, the picture reeks of whorishness and self-disgust; it treats the audience as if it were half dead, as if it needed to be brought twitching to life with one shock after another." This is extraordinarily exercised, and an interesting suggestion to make about a movie of which devoutly middle-of-the-road critics like those of the *Times* and *Time* mostly approved. My curiosity was aroused.

As often happens, most of the reviewers missed what I take to be the point of the film, although Maslin and others at least had the sense to notice it was funny and stylish. What Denby just couldn't get his mind around was the notion of a violent movie that is also, fundamentally, a comedy—with all the conventions of comedy, including the peculiarly happy ending. The world, Tarantino suggests, is a cruel and dangerous place, but there are some people who are such improbable vessels of luck as to be able to defy all reasonable expectations of disaster and float like happy bubbles on the surface of a turbulent and polluted current of general nastiness. This is the cheerier flip side of the dark assumption of *Reservoir Dogs*—that no matter how carefully one may plan a crime (or, indeed, any human enterprise), fate can take over, defy all the efforts of reason and, in the most brusque and farfetched way, assert its own kind of lofty justice.

What fate can destroy, fate can also protect and reward. The two deplorable specimens of sub-humanity in *True Romance* are such thoroughly stupid losers as to approximate the holy idiots of the Russian tradition and are, however unprepossessing and debased, relatives of Prince Myshkin. Clarence Worley (Christian Slater) works in a comic-book store in Detroit and gets his odd ideas about life and art from the merchandise in the bins. Alabama Whitman (Patricia Arquette) is our narratrix, whose even dimmer notions of reality are those of the romance magazines that she likes and to which the film's title refers. Essentially, we have an elaborate version of Mr. Magoo, in which two intellectually blind people stumble about, improbably spared by sheer luck from dangers of which they are not even aware but which, in any sane world, ought to destroy them.

The film makes this strange dissonance clear from the outset. We begin in a Detroit so dismal and garish as to make an Antonioni shudder. In *L'Eclisse* those barren industrial cityscapes were in a relatively forgiving black and white; here the colors of the pollution are an insupportably gaudy cyberpunk. And it is over these views of car hulks and wasteland that we hear Alabama explain how it was here that she "found her true love."

There is, in Hollywood, the venerable convention of the cute-meet, the *inventio* for a vast number of frothy comedies. To give one simple example: the madame and the psychiatrist are next to each other in line in the complaint department of the department store where each has come to protest the delivery of the other's altogether inappropriate couch. And in the line, they get to talking, realize how much they have in common, and—we're on to Act II. In *True Romance*, we get Clarence, Sad Sack of the Western world, who is celebrating his birthday by going to a kung-fu triple feature. The bimbo spills popcorn on him, then sits down, and they get to talking. After the movie, they go for a piece of pie, talk a little more, and wind up back at his apartment. The twist is that she's a set-up, a hooker who has been bought and paid for by the proprietor of the comic-book store as a birthday present for his sad-sack employee. And the twist on the twist is that she confesses all of this to him because she is such a simpleton that she is in love with him and is "basically a monogamous person." And of course he loves her too!

What can happen to people who live their lives in total incomprehension of their surroundings? It is hopeless, or ought to be, but Tarantino's comedy demonstrates that they are a couple of Typhoid Marys—they carry an awful taint, and anyone with whom they have dealings is likely to be destroyed, but they are too stupid to be destroyed themselves. In a quixotic way—that is, both romantic and asinine—Clarence decides to pay a visit to Drexl (Gary Oldman), Alabama's pimp, so that he can "get her things." Alabama is not sure that this is so smart a plan, but she gives Clarence the address, and off he goes to certain destruction, except of course that it turns out to be Drexl's destruction. And what's more, Clarence grabs the wrong suitcase, so that he doesn't have Alabama's pitiable possessions but instead walks away with a fortune in cocaine! Now he's got some seriously bad people after him, and all Clarence has is his dim-witted determination and the encouragement and advice of a kind of guardian angel, who, of course, looks and sounds like Elvis Presley.

This is all clever enough, but what makes it truly ingenious is that the

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violence of the action allows Tarantino and director Tony Scott to be as intelligent as they please without having to worry about losing their audience. The typical moviegoer is not appreciably smarter than Clarence and has an attention span that can be measured in breaths. For any moviemaker to succeed, he must contrive a way of satisfying the humanoids while offering something else to those with IQs in three digits. In *Reservoir Dogs* and here in *True Romance*, Tarantino has figured out a way of doing elegant genre pieces, serious considerations of the way things happen in the world, with enough mayhem and bloodshed to satisfy even the crudest of moviegoers. That the smarter patrons can see what he's doing only adds to their appreciation of the wit of the exercise.

As even Denby noted, a conspiratorial feeling arises between the figures on screen and the knowing observers. There are a number of truly extraordinary, nearly campy performances that involve these winks and waves, including an amazing bit by Christopher Walken as a Mafioso and Dennis Hopper as his victim. Walken demonstrates that a smile and chuckle can be every bit as menacing as a frown or a scowl, while Hopper deliberately provokes him with the suggestion that all Sicilians have black ancestors. We can read the scene clearly and understand how Hopper is trying to enrage Walken so as to get a quicker, less painful death. It's up to Walken to carry the burden of this menace, and he does so with great charm and mannerly aplomb. It's like Stanley Kubrick's demonstration in *The Shining* that brightness and light can be as frightening as the shadows and murk of conventional horror flicks.

The feckless couple take their suitcase off to Los Angeles, which Scott contrives to make almost as ugly as Detroit, giving us not only the exuberant tawdriness of its motels and restaurants but colors of sky that seem positively diseased. I worried for a while that this change of locale might make for some degree of relaxation of the agreeable confinement and artifactuality of the movie, but this didn't happen. Saul Rubinek and Bronson Pinchot do small but graceful turns as a low-grade movie mogul and his lower-grade stooge to whom Clarence is trying to sell his nose candy. And the conclusion is as machine-tooled as any Feydeau farce, which is a bizarre stylistic model for a movie with such gritty and bloody substance . . . but why not? I think of how Kurosawa made *The Seven Samurai* and then saw John Sturges' exaggerated adaptation of the film, *The Magnificent Seven*, which he thought was so funny he made an exaggerated adaptation of that, which was *Yojimbo*. And the more outrageous these movies got, the darker their suggestions were about what kind of gods might be looking down and laughing at all this spectacular swordplay and strenuous gunplay.

In the end, the inevitable shoot-'em-up may involve just a few hundred pounds too many of flying feathers. We know by now what most of the falling bodies on the screen ought to have realized—that because this is farce, no one should take it personally. A severe philosophy, perhaps, but it is a lovely premise for a motion picture. This is one to catch!

John Woo's movies are also violent, and Woo has been much in the news. This successful Hong Kong cinéaste has made his Hollywood debut with *Hard Target*, which features Jean-Claude Van Damme as a Zydeco knight errant. Here too the notion is that with enough violence on the screen to satisfy the appetites of the mob, it is possible to make other more interesting kinds of gestures, choreographing intricate balletic effects and various sorts of jokes and diversions along the way. Some of the asides are hard not to like—as when Van Damme bites the rattle off the tail of a rattle snake and then punches it to stun it so that he can leave it for one of his pursuers. But the main joke is one of self-deprecation, and, if the film persistently makes fun of itself, then it winds up making fun of its audiences, too. Woo is laughing at us, whether we laugh at his movie or not.

The story, defiantly absurd, is a slight updating and downgrading of the 1932 movie *The Most Dangerous Game*, a piece of pinko paranoia in which ruthless rich men (what other kind is there?) hunt human game. Chance Boudreaux (Van Damme) goes up against these baddies and, in a warehouse out in the bayous that just happens to be full of old Mardi Gras paraphernalia, we get a series of attacks and counterattacks, beatings, shots, and explosions that are at first strenuous enough to be lively but quickly turn repetitive and tiresome. Neither frightening nor funny, but just . . . too long. I rented *The Killer*, one of Woo's last Hong Kong carnage movies, about a cop and a killer who recognize that they have a lot in common. Its final scene, a shoot-out in a church, was a spoof not just of itself but of all movies, especially the old De Mille melodramas. In this, the not-altogether-bad bad guy resolves to sacrifice himself, if only the cop, his fraternal adversary, will promise to arrange for a surgeon to use his corneas to restore the sight of the poor blinded singer he loves, but wouldn't you know—these noble intentions are altogether frustrated when he gets shot in the eyes. Blinded and dying, he gropes along the floor for the blinded girl who is groping toward him—and they miss each other! It's so extravagant and movie-ish as to radiate a certain degree of dim charm. At least the audience isn't the only hard target, as is the case with his latest film.

David R. Slavitt is a poet and novelist living in Philadelphia.

For the American Soldier Dragged Through the Streets in Somalia

October 5, 1993

by Katherine McAlpine

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one more bloody sacrifice to another
foreign war. How long before we learn
just to keep out and let them kill each other?

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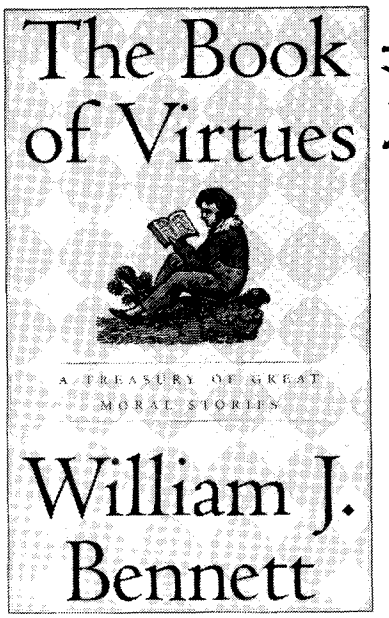

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